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A Rhetoric of Instrumentality:

Documentary Film in the Landscape of Public Memory

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by

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Dedication

For Chaim Silberstrom,

who taught me to choose life.

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A Rhetoric of Instrumentality:

Documentary Film in The Landscape of Public Memory

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We are at a particular moment in history where new technologies are changing the way films are made, distributed, and screened, as well as how audiences interact with documentary texts and discourses. This dissertation project questions documentary's instrumentality in the public sphere in two parts. Using the response to Ken Burns' *The War,* as a point of departure, it first addresses the lacuna of theory and scholarship on documentary films, owed largely to its nascent arrival in academia as a dedicated field of study. Using the films and the public response around the films, I point out the problems with how documentary has been understood in both public and academic thought, with particular emphasis on truth claims, subjectivity narratives, and audience identification, as well as production techniques as rhetoric. Secondly the project takes two cases studies to examine these issues in documentary discourse and to exemplify the ways technology is changing documentary as we know it, one a reality television show focused on teenage mothers and the other Michael Moore's well known film *Fahrenheit 9/11*. Ultimately I argue that we are in a new era of documentary production that may be characterized by its interactivity between films, publics, and discourses. It is my hope that by combining my practical knowledge of documentary production for film and television with academic scholarship I will provide a valuable text for documentary theorists and rhetoricians alike.

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INTRODUCTION:

The Interactive Form of the New Documentary

Just as America's preeminent filmmaker Ken Burns was finishing post-production on his fourteen and half hour documentary series *War* (2007), US Latino community leaders began organizing around issues of representation in the film – specifically, for what they saw as an exclusion of Latino stories in the film's narrative.[1] Burns had been working on the film for over six years, aiming to tell a more "personal" story of World War II through the first person accounts of American veterans who lived through it. After learning about the film, University of Texas Journalism professor Maggie Rivas-Rodriguez (who had previously conducted oral histories with Latino veterans for her research) found that the film did not include the testimony of one Latino soldier (at least 500,000 Latinos are credited with US military service during WW II).[2] In response Rodriguez began a public campaign to demand the inclusion of Latino veterans in the

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[1] *The War*, directed by Ken Burns and Lynn Novick (2007; Boston, MA: PBS International, 2007), DVD.
[2] Paul Farhi, "Burns Won't Reedit 'War,' PBS Clarifies," *Washington Post,* April 19 2007. Additionally, it is widely known that Latino demographics are difficult to estimate in size due to the history of race laws in the United States, for more information please see Evelyn Nakano Glenn, *Unequal Freedom, How Race and Gender Shaped American Citizenship and Labor* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2002).

film and spearheaded a coalition of Latino and Chicano organizations, called Defend the Honor (herein, DTH). DTH's organizing efforts put enormous public pressure on Burns, PBS (who provided funding and was scheduled to air the program), CPB, and the film's corporate funders, to intercede and alter the course of production as it neared completion.

What follows in this introduction is a closer look into the case of DTH, to highlight the elements of documentary film that my larger dissertation project will take as its focus. Specifically the case of DTH represents a larger shift in the ways documentary films and the public interact, through the creation of new public spaces - owed largely to material conditions created by recent revolutions in technology (both online and in new filmmaking technologies). First the rapid expansion of the internet as a public forum, has provided new venues to view documentary video (like Hulu, among others) as well as places for user generated content (YouTube, and iTunes video podcasts, among others), which often provide for interactive commentary by filmmakers and end-users. Secondly, the continual decrease of production costs for documentary, in both cheaper and more accessible professional cameras and editing software, have allowed for smaller budget films to be made in larger numbers, in shorter spans of time. The result has been a more democratized public space of documentary, which connects publics, discourses, and texts. This project is an inquiry into the constituent components of this space and what redefinitions are then required in theorizing the instrumentality of documentary therein.

In order to better understand this new phenomenon, the body of my dissertation project will present two case studies of documentary films, each of which will necessarily be attentive not only to a particular documentary, but rather to the cluster of media that

constituted its event -- the original framing of public expectations which it occupied. This context of technology in relationship to the construction of subjectivity is essential to understanding how documentaries are changing public discourse on memory and history by changing the definitions of public space and community itself. I will present a case study that is a documentary designed for theatrical release, followed by a reality television series, contrasting the divergent designs of documentaries made for television and theatrical release. In so doing I will historicize and contextualize the changes seen in the case studies that follow, as products of the democratizing of video production and online venues for user-generated video content - as well as of the requirement for any new commercial documentary to be surrounded by supplemental content including "teaching materials" and websites, among others. These cases will show changes in the ways and venues for audiences to communicate, from what I imagine will be a transformation from "talk backs" to interactive documentary texts and publics.

Documentary film has long been constituted as a form of public speech in rhetoric and language studies scholarship, but the project as I pursue it seeks to define the "public sphere" of documentary cinema and its instrumentality more comprehensively, to include some new inter-active interfaces of the medium. Changing technologies and new media have shifted the way the public consumes film and video, and I will argue that the documentary film has profited from this. Two decades ago, the documentary was often confined to public television, now, it has achieved a new rhetorical power within the sphere of public media. In so doing documentary is achieving the status of a hegemonic or counter-hegemonic oration, already staged within the public sphere, with known

networks of circulation and consumption. In the terms familiar to rhetoric since the Greeks, the instrumentality of video in the public sphere can no longer be a question, as Kevin Kelly from the *New York Times* explains:

> When technology shifts, it bends culture . . . . On the screen, the subjective again trumps the objective. The past is a rush of data streams cut and rearranged into a new mashup, while truth is something you assemble yourself on your own screen as you jump from link to link. We are now in the middle of a second Gutenberg shift — from book fluency to screen fluency, from literacy to visuality.[3]

Thus, this project assumes that video[4]-- and particularly documentaries on video – may be more correctly described as the "the new oratory."

This metaphor can clarify what is at stake in that shift. We must remember that, like the Sophists, filmmakers now commonly travel around the globe – to screen or send out their works, as DVDs or limited releases – to perform their messages for domestic and increasingly international publics. Also like the speeches of the Sophists, documentary films communicate through their content and aesthetics. Extending this comparison, I believe that documentary style can be situated as lying somewhere between the form driven motives of Gorgias and the civics-centered idioms of Isocrates.

Through such comparisons I hope to reconceptualize documentary film as a vital subject for rhetoricians, as a site for events every bit as public and interactive as the great orations and debates of the past. To solidify these connections I will utilize Aristotle's *Rhetoric,* specifically his artistic proofs, to understand documentary as a persuasive text.[5]

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[3] Kevin Kelly, "Becoming Screen Literate," *New York Times* (New York, NY), Nov. 21 2008.
[4] I will use the term "video" to refer to any form of film, streaming or digital media that occupies the space formerly associated with "film" alone.
[5] Aristotle, *Rhetoric,* W. Rhys Roberts translator (New York: Dover Publications, 2004).

I will also use Carl Platinga's, *Rhetoric and Representation in Documentary Film,* which is the best existing scholarly text that connects the two disciplines of documentary and rhetorical studies.[6] I will also use the work of rhetorician Kevin Deluca *Image Politics*, which situates the politics of images within the realm of new social movements, which cast transgressive media events as effective instruments of counter-hegemonic political agendas.[7] This echo may have been accidental, but it allows me to consider the documentary in the sphere of rhetoric rather than as film, which has been the most common approach to it in the history of scholarly work on documentary, as we shall see in the first chapter following this introduction. To make that point in another way, the major portion of this introduction will be devoted to a brief case study that makes the case that the documentary has taken a new place as a kind of rhetoric in the public sphere, neither limited in space and time as are classic rhetorical spaces, nor simply assigned to a master narrative of culture or their opposition, as film and more traditional documentaries have been.

This new position of the documentary means that this project will need to begin by reviewing historical approaches to documentary, which will be the task of chapter one below. My goal of that presentation is to clarify how traditional documentary video has been framed historically in scholarly study. Chapter two will turn more directly to the theoretical issues at the basis of that historical project. The two chapters together will provide the foundation for my case studies, to characterize what I feel is a more

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[6] Carl Platinga, *Rhetoric and Representation in Nonfiction Film* (Michigan: Chapbook Press, 2010).
[7] Kevin Deluca, *Image Politics* (New York, NY: The Guilford Press, 1999).

comprehensive approach necessary to studying the documentary of the last decade in particular, as the whole position of documentary has shifted into a more comprehensive media position within the public sphere than its earlier predecessors did.

The third and fourth chapters of this project will present two case studies of recent documentary works that show their greater engagement with their publics, in various mediated forms, representing both theatrical and televised documentaries. Chapter three will look at Michael Moore's Fahrenheit 9/11 (2004) and Chapter four will examine a reality tv series featuring teenage mothers as its subject.[8] In particular, these two case studies will show advantages in discussing the new documentary and its methods of multiple media engagement as a rhetorical phenomenon, in which the documentarians not only pay attention to but also elicit new forms of audience reception for their works.

This project is not absolutely new in inspiration. Such cinematic tools have commonly been examined in the context of analyzing propaganda videos. However, the documentary has been left out of such rhetorical readings in no small part because of its historical classification as "non-fiction." Yet the very act of filmmaking in any form, including documentary, is rhetorical at its essence. For instance, the technical moves made by camera operators in the improvisational "set" of a documentary are constituted as an editing choice, among various available representation, each familiar and meaningful to audiences and technical people alike. While on the one hand the camera moves of the documentary filmmaker are not rehearsed, the camera operator (and or

[8] I worked on the shows discussed in this Chapter and due to the heavy penalties assigned in my confidentiality agreement I cannot disclose the shows' names.

director) must choose how to shoot the action as quickly as it occurs (as opposed to scene "blocking" in narrative film), and must make that shot *speak* coherently within the documentary. In practical terms, zooming a camera lens in allows the operator to frame or emphasize one subject or object within the visual field of the camera, and in its larger relationship to the story's narrative - whereas zooming out will frame multiple subjects or objects therein. Any such technical choice, therefore, instantly carries with it specific weight of meaning, much as the conventions of verbal rhetoric do. The two case studies presented in chapters four and five below will thus focus on how camera moves like zooming or adjusting depth of field functions as an inherently persuasive device in film that tells the viewer where to focus their attention in the frame.

In doing these readings, the established history of documentary becomes important in another way. Some elements of the "camera rhetoric" I have just sketched have remained relatively stable over time as film gestures with established logical meanings, like zooming (just explained), cross-cutting (creating a juxtaposition of point of view from inter-cutting different takes), lighting, and focus. Yet others have a very strong intertextual element: documentaries have often referred to each other, as well as to technical elements of filmmaking. In paying attention to this in my close readings, I hope to create an index of such terms *as rhetorical devices with very particular epistemological claims* within the current generation of documentary filmmaking, which I hope others will find quite utilitarian for their own work in analyzing and teaching.

The questions that guide the present project are thus:

- What kind of a new model for today's documentary film-making can be found in understanding its new modes of discourse creation through public dialogue, which redefines the genres function as "public speech," in an era when neither of its traditional definitions -- as quasi-scientific documentation of a subject, or as aesthetic product -- seem to encompass a situation such as that seen above? This question has become particularly interesting in the context of new technologies and the emergence of a newer generation of documentary filmmakers who are seen less as objective documenters, and more as persuasive speakers or authors, writing their versions of history into American public memory.
- What kinds of public speech can documentary films, as media products, be considered to engage in? The Defend the Honor versus Ken Burns' *War* case to which I turn next suggests that it can be instrumental in creating new discourses, publics/counter-publics, and spaces of productive political contestation around issues of American public memory.
- What resources might we need to make the links between traditional film analysis and the kind of rhetorical analysis that would help us understand the nature of those new interactive public spaces of documentary and the dialogue therein that fosters productive contestation? This question will be particularly significant in identifying the subject positions and types of agency inherent in the space of documentary film contestations and in creating spaces where hegemonic histories and identities can be (re)written and transgressed against.

The case of Ken Burns' *The War and* Defend the Honor show how these questions may emerge in the current historical moment, as a representative site of documentary projection, showing how a more traditional documentary moved into a new interactive public space. The larger polemics of documentary as public discourse which emerge complicate the traditional divide assumed between non-fiction/fiction and historian/filmmaker, a differentiation which has so long been the norm for documentary studies. This example of some of the new interactive interface between the documentary texts and its public(s) calls into question how scholars have treated the new documentary text and makes the case that it needs to be materially or technologically re-positioned as a living entity of its own.

Introducing the New Documentary Polemics: The Case of DTH

The public and private reactions to *The War's* polemics highlight the connection between documentary films and public memory, calling into question the genre's truth claims in new ways. As we shall see, not just the documentary itself, but even the design of the film poster for *War* are connected to hegemonic discourses, working as a cluster of representations that each bring certain rhetorical force to the meaning of the documentary as a rhetorical event, more than as the expression of meaning..

When Defend the Honor made its public claims, as noted above, it had great incentives to be written into a Ken Burns project, particularly as documentary is now understood as an arbiter of historical truth(s), a persuasive text that can authorize and

legitimize certain histories through the filmmakers' point of view. Sen. Robert Menendez (D-N.J.), member of the US Congressional Hispanic Caucus and DTH spoke to that need to intervene in a Ken Burns production, throwing his professional weight into the issue: "Ken Burns is a well-known filmmaker, and whether it's fair or not, his films are viewed by many as definitive histories. It is socially responsible and historically accurate to include the invaluable contributions of Hispanic Americans not as a footnote, but as part of the actual story of World War II."[9]

In his statement, Senator Menendez alludes to Ken Burns' status as the "golden boy" of American documentary film, whose prominent role in the field has been institutionalized through decades of documentary work with PBS. Thus he is alluding to the fact that a Ken Burns film has an expected and sizable audience, with a guaranteed distribution and visibility in advertising, as well as a long shelf-life (in public libraries and the public school curriculum, among others). Senator Menendez thus brings up Burns' position of documentary authority, to show the public perception that Burns' work has the ability to *change* public memory, rather than just document it. Documentarians themselves acknowledge this power. For instance, US independent filmmaker George Cisneros explains that the life of a documentary extends beyond its broadcast schedule and/or theatrical run, much like historical textbooks: "It goes onto the shelf, and people come back to it over and over again."[10] DTH was particularly interested in profiting from

[9] Ibid.
[10] Elaine Ayala, "The Battle Behind Ken Burns' 'The War,' Latino Activists' Victory Could Have a Lasting Impact," *San Antonio Express* (San Antonio: TX) Sept. 26, 2007.

that visibility in rewriting the histories of World War II to include the Latino voices that they felt were excluded.

DTH administrators saw some movement towards their goals of rewriting public memory, after several meetings with PBS executives, when PBS and Burns called in noted Texas independent producer and filmmaker Hector Galán (*Frontline* series*, Chicano! The History of the Chicano Movement* [1996] and *Los Lonely Boys: Cottonfields and Crossroads* [2006]) to create 28 minutes of additional content, which told the stories of Latino veterans. In an interview with the *San Antonio Express*, Galán himself noted as a particularly poignant move the unprecedented nature of PBS' intervention, given how close Burns was to wrapping the film, noting "when you lock a picture, that's a done deal."[11] This kind of intervention, therefore, was not just unprecedented as it came so late in the process, but also as an indication of almost unprecedented dialogue between the industry and a community that was being documented as a particular kind of public memory.

"Public memory" is a term which can be defined as the way citizens remember historical events, and how those memories are institutionalized and filtered through hegemonic ideologies to construct public(s) and identities, public memory scholar Edward S. Casey distinguishes public memory from other forms of memory as follows, "public memory is radically bivalent in is temporality. . . It is both attached to the a past (an originating event) and acts to ensure a future of further remembering of that same

[11] Ibid.

event."[12] Casey points to the ephemeral nature of public memory, which allows such histories to be re-written, as documentary films open a public space(s) that can propel alternative or subaltern histories into hegemonic historical discourse. Ultimately these new or recontextualized public memories provide a source of identification for communities to become public(s). Public memory scholar Kendall R. Phillips explains:

> These public memories are those about which we can interact, deliberate, and share. And, in turn, these public memories serve as a horizon within which a public finds itself, constitutes itself, and deliberates its own existence . . .. Thus, the horizon of public memory both constitutes our sense of public and allows a space wherein individuals can become public beings.[13]

Ken Burns' project had changed its identity from a product of a documentary filmmaker of great repute as a historian, and into the more public archive of memory that these scholars define.

Seen in this light, DTH wanted to move their personal and community memories into the public, so that those memories and the community itself could be assimilated into American discourses of citizenship and military service, among others, to publicly establish their legacy within the rhetorical frames of military service and nationalist ideology (as all discourse is filtered through ideology). In so doing, they hoped to reaffirm public and private identities, as those memories are mutually constitutive, and so they placed an almost unimaginable premium on Burns' act of filmic representation in American public memory. For the Latino communities, that premium was a validation for their service to the country, which was ultimately a community still asking to be

[12] Edward S. Casey, "Public Memory in Place and Time," in *Framing Public Memory,* ed. Kendall R. Phillips (Tuscaloosa: The University of Alabama Press, 2004), 17.
[13] Kendall R. Phillips, ed., *Framing Public Memory* (Tuscaloosa: The University of Alabama Press, 2004), 4.

recognized as American citizens. PBS paid that premium in requiring more film to be added to the *War* project.

This goal of inclusion is not new, yet the ways in which this documentary film was entered into a debate about a community's public memory is important. The traditional assumption is that the genre is more truthful and educational than other kinds of film -- that the genre has "truth claims," an assumption which raises the stakes of its place in the politics of representation, as DTH insisted.

The assumption of documentary "truth" is often traced back to 1830 when the still camera was introduced to French Parliament as a "scientific instrument," designed to produce "evidence and truth."[14] This idea carried into the commercialization of the still camera, just as it did into the birth of the moving image camera for documentary purposes. In fact, the advent of the newsreel in the late 1800s is often considered the birth of the documentary film genre, beginning with French filmmaker Louis Lumière, who would shoot various scenes, like trains, and public ceremonies, among others, which he would later screen to paying members of the public from a projector.

Interestingly, the audience's response to the "truthfulness" of the representations projected on screen can be seen in traditional narratives of the origin of documentary as the archetypal viewer of the new film form is quoted as exclaiming, "It's life itself!"[15] As film scholars tell the story, documentary film had, by the early 1900s, already defined themselves in opposition to the flourishing art of narrative or fiction cinema. This

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[14] Michael Chanan, *The Politics of Documentary* (London: The British Film Institute, 2007), 60.
[15] Jack C. Ellis and Betsy A. McLane, *A New History of Documentary Film* (New York: Continuum, 2006), 6.

dichotomy has been retained in most, if not all, histories of the documentary form today: filmmaking is seen as divided into two forms, along the lines of the traditional divisions between art and science, which emphasized truth-claims in the documentary form.

DTH thus reacted quite predictably when its politics of public memory focused on Burns' documentary. DTH saw the lack of Latino representation in *War* as indicative of a larger lacuna in American historical discourse about Latino military participation in WWII, and thus aimed to change who Americans remember as WWII veterans and in turn redefine the identity of the Latino community as a set of patriotic citizens. For DTH, accomplishing this goal would engender a discursive shift in typical WW II narratives that would allow those veterans to honor their own, heretofore lost, past, while solidifying a future community identity highlighting its heretofore marginalized national community of Latino veterans. In the case of DTH, their dedication to preserving the past was a conscious move to remake the future, as well, since archiving the stories of a dying generation of WWII Latino veterans would help ensure an American-Latino community identity for the future.

Hector Galán discussed these issues of representation and identity from a personal and community based perspective during a telephone conversation with the present author in August 2008.[16] Galán explained that his father Raul was a WWII veteran who, like many elders in his community, felt that serving his country in the military was supposed to invoke the recognition and validation of American citizenship from the public. He reiterated that citizenship and racism are closely linked issues in the Chicano

[16] Hector Galan, in a personal telephone conversation with the author, August 15, 2009.

community, since the (often unknown) history of Chicano immigration has become such a political topic again today. When Chicano veterans returned home from the Second World War, they faced *de facto* segregation in the public sphere.[17] Galán explained that this political and cultural antipathy towards Latino veterans was equally as marginalizing as the lacuna of information on them in public discourse. That is to say: while the community members may have had their legal citizenship papers at the time they served in WWII, their stories have yet to be assimilated into the American story of WWII. The absence of these stories deprived the community of a shared Latino American identity, gained through interpolating community memories into national ones. Galán said that the Latino community, in asking for visibility in *The War,* was really making a demand for the "the right to exist" in this country, because the stories of Latino veterans are American stories.[18] This demand is particularly political, given the attention paid over the last decade to recovering other "forgotten" veterans' stories before the "Greatest Generation" dies out, including the stories of African-Americans, among others.

Galán was excited to help cement his community's memories in *War* through creating more inclusive content*,* but after the completion of his supplementary materials, DTH took a new position, one that moved beyond inclusion and the purported truth value of documentaries, and into questions of the rhetoric of representation in the service of public memory. After DTH was given a preview of Galán's new materials, they publicly decried how Galán's work was placed in the film – not how it was made in production,

[17] See Glen, "Unequal Freedoms," among others.
[18] Hector Galan, in a personal telephone conversation with the author, August 15, 2009.

but how it was integrated into the whole in post-production editing, as explained on the organization's homepage:

> Burns had promised on April 17, 2007, in a meeting with Latino organizations and elected leaders held in Washington, DC, that the additional material would be added in a seamless manner. The interviews were added AFTER the episodes, as obvious supplements. THEY WERE NOT ADDED IN A SEAMLESS MANNER.[19]

Thus for DTH, their demands for adequate representation meant not just making the stories of Latino veterans present in the film, but also how those representations fit into the larger story arc of the film, and how they were packaged stylistically. This critique is analogous to an early critique of Black History Month: after arguing for and often achieving an integration of diversity into public school curriculum, or a "rainbow curriculum," proponents later bemoaned the manner in which it was implemented – i.e. compartmentalizing and consolidating the content into one month, rather than integrating African-American history into the curriculum for the year, as integral to The American story. Thus the question of representation in documentary film emerged into the debate about *The War* not just in terms of the truth of representation -- a question of content -- but now also one of form, or how that "truth" is packaged

Interestingly, PBS's decision to intervene in the production had taken into account that the audience for the newly augmented Burns documentary would understand that stylistic elements of such a film may well play such a role for the audience, as well.

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[19] Manuel G. Aviles-Santiago, "Defend the Honor," *Defend the Honor*, accessed 14 September 2008, website http://www.defendthehonor.org/.

Despite the claims of DTH that the new material lacked continuity, Chief of PBS Programming John Wilson issued the statement that:

> The new footage that Burns produces "will be part of the broadcast" of the film, its DVD and teaching materials that accompany it. "To the viewer at home, it will be part of the same contiguous experience" as the documentary itself, with "the same tone and tenor and production qualities" of the documentary.[20]

Wilson emphasizes the importance of aesthetic continuity between the sections; to note that, if the footage read differently in the "tone and tenor and production qualities" – by deviating from color themes, and interview setups, among other stylistic/technical features – the stories would be singled out by their lack in continuity. Thus he acknowledges that, while stories of Latino veterans might be present in the story arc, if they were to be cast within a stylistic hierarchy of subjects in the film, they would become subject to *stylistic* marginalization within the narrative. This would then be apparent in the films' visual cues to the audience, ultimately returning the stories of Latino veterans to a subjugated position within the larger frames of American public memory.

That kind of stylistic integration was not necessarily accomplished in all facets of the completed project -- what PBS claimed it wanted was not necessarily achieved. For example, the film poster for *War* is relatively minimalist in design and features one Caucasian soldier, holding one gun, underneath bold font that reads, "The War. An Intimate History." The design utilizes a specific visual rhetoric by presenting an ostensibly singular subject of American WWII history, by the veterans' special

[20]Farhi, "Burns Won't Reedit."

positioning under the tile “The War,” wherein “The Veteran” becomes a rhetorical reference point in the film's representation that universalizes the experiences of the soldier as those of a white soldier. The soldier’s face is warm and humanized, featured underneath the sub-title, “An Intimate History,” which lets the viewer know this is not a standard war film about the tactical strategies of hardened soldiers on enemy terrain, but appeals instead to pathos, by marketing the story as something deeply personal. On this level, the poster beckons identification from prospective audience members to see themselves, their friends and family members in or who have served in the military.

Yet looking at the Caucasian face of the soldier, critics like DTH would ask, whose friends? Whose family members?[21] While the film did have sections about other ethnicities, it was not packaged to emphasize that diversity, and thus the poster was designed in a manner which perpetuated the image of the Caucasian war hero as the hegemonic index for all statements about the war it represented. This issue of packaging points not only to the way things are framed for certain audiences, but also reveals the ideological point of view of the filmmaker, his positionality. My point here is not to charge Ken Burns with racism, particularly as he showed a commitment to working with DTH against his own personal vision of a project that he spent almost a decade developing. Rather, Burns' voice is indicative of the ways in which hegemonic discourses are often tacitly reproduced in documentary films -- their "truth value" is by no means uncolored by hegemonic power economies.

[21] While Ken Burns did not design the movie poster himself, he did approve the final design and provide feedback, Hector Galan, in a personal telephone conversation with the author, August 15, 2009.

The "truth" revealed by the production of that documentary was, moreover, never as clear-cut as the DTH side insisted. In a personal conversation (2008), Galán explained that, before he began pre-production, he watched the existing footage of *War*, wherein he saw that Burns went out of his way to include the role of African-Americans and Jewish Americans, among others, but not Latinos. Additionally, Galán clarified that the original footage did include Chicano voices, but those interviewees were not identified as such or presented in a cohesive narrative, like those designated in specific sections on African-Americans and Jewish servicemen. As a filmmaker/producer and former Chicano activist, he said he was torn between his knowledge of production and personal politics, recounting, "As a Latino I was outraged, but as a producer I felt bad for Ken."[22] Galán's comments also point to the importance of production in crafting history, because unlike the written text book, the filmic representation of history is intertextual in many more dimensions (aural, visual, and textual) and thus requires an attention all three dimensions of filmmaking, separately as well as how they are edited together or juxtaposed to create multi-sensory messages for the viewer.

Although Burns played coy in many of his public utterances about the project, his remarks made during an interview with communications studies scholar Gary Edgerton in 2004 show him to be more conscious about his role of creating public memory. In it, he speaks more broadly to the question of ethos inherent in the relationship between filmmaker and historian that Galán's comments underscored in their own way. Burns clarified a previous public statement he had made in regards to the production of *Civil*

[22] Hector Galan, in a personal telephone conversation with the author, August 12, 2008.

War (1990), when he claimed "I am not a historian."[23] He recounted to Edgerton, "I just wanted to say that I wasn't a historian in the traditional, professional sense . . . and I think it may have been a little insulation or armor that would protect me."[24] This is particularly interesting because of the filmmaker's awareness of a more traditional image of documentary films, spanning historical truth and artistic representation. Burns choose not to align himself more traditionally with the former, instead positioning himself within the latter for the artistic license granted to creative renderings of history. However, Edgerton realigns Burns with the sciences-- with "scientific" history-writing-- by noting how his process of filmmaking resembles the work of a "professional" or academic historian:

> His preparation for each historical documentary includes the disciplined rigors of thoroughly researching his subject, writing grant proposals, collaborating and debating with an assortment of scholarly advisers, composing multiple drafts of the off-screen narration, and gathering and selecting the background readings and the expert commentaries.[25]

Here, Edgerton defines Burns' process as close to that of a "professional" historian, not necessarily accounting for the crew of researchers and assistants who can be expected to have helped in Burns' extensive research process (as they do for historians like Robert Caro, in his books about Lyndon Baines Johnson). In this comment, the aesthetics of documentary production as filmmaking has been cast as secondary to its scientific documentation. The question here is one of ethos, the relationship between documentarians and their subjects in a situation where the filmmaker has the power to

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[23] Gary R. Edgerton, "Ken Burns' America Reconsidered," *Quest* Wint 7, Issue 1 (2004), 2.
[24] Ibid.
[25] Ibid.

absorb their subjects and constrain them within their version of the story being told, and thereby ultimately limit their agency in constructing "their own" history.

I am using the term *ethos* here quite consciously, because, as I will treat in more detail in addressing documentary theory (Chapter 2), I believe that what has traditionally been considered aesthetic choices (panning, lenses, etc.) also needs to be considered as rhetorical moves, positioning the filmmaker's point of view as a kind of speaker-agent within social and political discourses, here identity politics. Such agents filter the frames of dominant public memory, and they can even transgress against it -- for example, by consolidating African American history one month, rather than integrating it into the American history curriculum. Similarly, if the "sections" in *The War* on ethnic minorities are not seen as cohesive in style, then the aesthetics of film tacitly or overtly follows the aesthetics of the hegemonic American archive - whose subject is white and in which "others" are subjugated as supplementary.

Thus when Burns argued, using aesthetic vocabulary, that his intentions were to create "a sort of epic poem, not a textbook," his claim seemed to absolve him of responsibility to the representations in his work by positioning himself on the side of art rather than science or news. In one sense, his rhetorical move deceives by subordinating the active role of the filmmaker in mediating historical discourse, as the work of documentary is both aesthetic and historical. Such a statement is particularly ironic because Burns utilizes traditional models of documentary films, which often appear to be or are defined as an effort at documentation rather than at the production of art, which he confirms in his avowed practice of not retouching photos. Moreover, he is widely known

to have been instrumental in establishing one of the most visible of current conventions of using photographic stills in documentary filmmaking, "The Ken Burns Effect" – seen in the Apple Corporation's Imovie software where it was featured as one of its themes - referring to a movements of the still image in the frame, also known as the "pan and scan."

Such issues will recur later in the present discussion, but for now, the Burns case points to how the traditional binary of art and science (feature film and documentary) collapses in documentary films. Both are equally subject to questions of representation and ideology and contribute in kind to the production of public memory. The Burns case, however, also suggests that documentary has become interactive in new ways, asking the filmmaker to be accountable – or at least reply - in new ways to the public's response to their text. Ultimately, Galán's additional content was inserted into to *The War* by Burn's editors, and so the final edit did indeed lack the aesthetic continuity DTH requested after they had viewed the completed supplementary materials. However it was resolved, the controversy is critical for the present discussion because it does reveal the reciprocity of speech acts between the public and filmmaker that emerge in clusters of interactions, often in unforeseen forms -- represented here by the issues of Latino representation raised long after *The War* was "locked."

While PBS did not concede all of DTH's requests, DTH's campaign had its success in new PBS programming and funding initiatives designed to provide greater publicity to stories made by and/or about members of the Latino community. PBS began airing more Latino content around the initial airdate of *War*, including *five* feature films

on various Latino subjects.[26] Notably in 2009, Hector Galán began pre-production on his "opus" on the history of Latinos in the US military, which received $30,000.00 from PBS. As a veteran of the genre, Galán often serves on grant review boards for PBS (among other documentary funders) and recently remarked on how he has seen an increase in Latino programming in his grant review cycles.[27] Moreover, DTH continues to utilize the momentum from the controversy to campaign for more inclusive representation practices for Latinos in public broadcasting and film. Maggie Rodriguez explained the irony of *War* in how it galvanized the Latino community in ways not seen since the Chicano civil rights movement, which in turn has sustained the creation of more public spaces for Latinos to tell their stories.[28] Thus the situation ended in creating new agency in the situation: the public(s) and discourse(s) which emerged from the film controversy have facilitated spaces to rewrite American public memory on WWII.

These clusters of moments of public discussion suggest that a reconceptualization of documentary is critical as the newer generations of documentaries and documentary filmmakers are seen by the public as *producing* political identities and public memories, not just recording truths. In the DTH case, memories and identities were produced and reproduced in an on-going, reciprocal political dialogue between documentaries and their public(s), across time and often not in face-to-face dialogues, but clearly in response to each other. The result is the emergence of new public agency, as is seen in DTH's massive grassroots effort to propel the memories of Latino veterans into America's public

[26] The Associated Press, "A Ken Burns Guilt Trip at PBS?" *USA Today* (McLean, VA), Aug. 26 2007.
[27] Hector Galan, in a personal telephone conversation with the author, August 15, 2009.
[28] Ayala, "The Battle."

memory. Their insistence on the style of the representation, moreover, speaks especially strongly to the interactive quality of the new generations of films.

The clusters of what might straightforwardly be called "speech acts" around documentary is recorded as an interactive dialogue between the public and documentary texts, including not only interviews, but also "talk backs" after screenings, in online forums, and even in films challenging films (for example the film "Manufacturing Dissent," 2007, which charges Michael Moore for manipulating "the truth" in his films, including *Roger & Me)*.[29] While films have always been discussed intertextually, as they quote and "talked to each other," these new clusters should, I believe, be considered discussions with rhetorical forms conditioned by new modes of interaction through various media and in new forums (like blogs and talk backs, which individuals and accelerate the more passive interactions of traditional reviews). If even such benchmark documentary films as Burns' *The War* continue to be interrogated by the public, newer and more inclusive discourses of public memory emerge and are consciously used by those groups questioning the political weight of documentarianism.

Thus these new modes of public interaction through the clusters of speech acts surrounding new documentaries function rhetorically, by increasing agency and representation, much in the spirit of American ideology and engaging American public memory in new ways. This case, then, argues for a set of research questions like those noted above. Documentaries became political and counter-hegemonic when catalyzed by

[29] Monika Bartyze, *Manufacturing Dissent,* HD Video, (2007; Surrey: Persistence of Vision Productions), HD Video.

the social movements of the late 1970s and 1980s, yielding films that have made indelible imprints on the frames of American celluloid and public memory. As technology has gotten cheaper, documentary filmmaking has proliferated in many different framings, increasingly more inclusive of counter-hegemonic narratives and of broader representations of marginalized communities in television and film (however insufficiently). New forms of speech in *and around* documentary film, in clusters of public speech, begin to actively rewrite public memory. Moreover, digital access has increased the speech of such interactions to the point where they need to be considered part of dialogues, not just receptions after the fact. From blogs through counter-documentaries, the "documentary film" of the past has now become an event of public discourse in new, heretofore unanticipated ways.

And the newer generations of documentarians themselves are aware of this shift. For instance, Galán's current project exemplifies this pattern, as it focuses specifically on Chicano veterans as opposed to the larger group of Latino veterans. Galán's funding proposal is explicitly phrased in terms of problems of representation: he begins by asking how different communities of Latinos are represented in American public memory, arguing that, while Cubans are cast as political refugees, Chicanos have historically been placed within a rhetoric of the unwanted immigrant – two very different positions in regards to discourses of American citizenship and nationalism. Thus Galán seeks not just to *document* but also to change public memory about his community in his current project, which could not have been as plausible without the discursive space opened up by initiatives and situations like DTH.

Conclusions:

The Problem of Truth, Instrumentality, and Aesthetics in Documentary

The present project will thus address the practice of documentary film-making as *public speech*, including not only stylistic choices (such as lighting and shot angles, among others), here redefined as rhetorical moves, but also the ways in which the films are packaged and sold prior to distribution, as exemplified above by *The War's* movie poster.

The DTH case argues that documentary films have become instrumental in creating and affirming such spaces of public memory, but that instrumentality needs to be redefined in the context of documentary clusters. That instrumentality will be defined as put forth by rhetoric scholars Bowers, Ochs, and Jensen, whose seminal text, *The Rhetoric of Agitation and Control*, defines it as the characteristic of a message or speech act that, "contributes to the production of another message or act."[30] Importantly, they define instrumentality as it relates to the efficacy of messages used towards the aims of social movements, and their adversaries, but I propose to use it here as it relates to public memory, as well. That is to say, even while all documentary films are not explicitly trying to further institutional reform, many generally intervene in political and social discourse(s) around their subject, and thus alter the way we remember that historical event and/or subject. Thus I conceive the instrumentality of documentary films to be

[30] John W. Bowers, Donovan J. Ochs, and Richard J. Jensen, *The Rhetoric of Agitation and Control*, Second Edition, (Prospect Heights: Waveland Press, Inc., 1993), 1.

inherent in the technical and persuasive framing of their filmic representations (or speech acts), as historical, political, and ideological arguments that contribute and communicate with other documentary discourses and public(s) to engender larger shifts in public memory and hegemonic discourse.

That form of instrumentality has overall not been taken up by documentary film studies, a field of study that has only recently been established in the academy, as we shall see in the first two chapters of the study. That branch of film studies is quickly taking root, but largely has not engaged perspectives from rhetoric and language studies scholars, and it is precisely at that intersection from which this project begins in asking about how media might claim such instrumentality: multi-media documents (sound + video + text), how do documentary films function in the public sphere persuasively, like more traditionally conceived acts of public speech or rhetoric, or like feature films?

A new definition of instrumentality in the public sphere that will apply to documentary film will thus have to take the following issues into consideration.

- The influence of the political and historical context of documentary production.
- The rhetorical function of the aesthetic and technical choices made by documentary filmmakers to frame the story within the political and social views of the filmmaker.
- The way in which the point of view of the filmmaker becomes inscribed in public memory as text, becoming an instrument of or a transgression against hegemonic ideology.

- Considerations for the notion that documentary texts are thought of by the public as being "neutral" or "objective," which can account for how this truth-framing buttresses the filmmakers claims to historical, social, and political truths.
- How the newest technological advancements of our era, facilitate communication between newer audiences or documentary public(s), documentary texts, documentary discourses and public memory.
- More specifically, in this new era marked by a video-centric culture, how has the internet has become the new town hall for documentary text(s) to be codified as public speech (in online venues for viewing documentary films as well as the film websites and related boards/listservs).
- Finally, the ways in which these new digital venues facilitate public(s) to contest issues of memory in documentary films.

These issues point to several kinds of direct challenges to the models of instrumentality in documentary film theory that I will discuss in the first part of the dissertation project. Some of these questions point to issues of agency and control within the public sphere, beyond the notion of instrumentality. They also, however, point to new limits emerging for a basic assumption about truth and representation in documentary films -- an overall epistemological question. Today's scholars cannot affirm that "the world [of the documentary] supposedly tells itself without any ideological intervention from its authors."[31] Nor will they ever affirm the early twentieth-century

[31] Jill Godmilow, "Kill the Documentary as We Know It," *Journal of Film and Video* 54.2, Summer/Fall (2002), 3.

claim that "science as an ideology of knowledge lends its authority to the camera as an instrument of objective observation."[32] Similarly, film aesthetics also speak in a rhetorical voice in a new way: *intertextuality* takes on new forms and new meanings in community talk backs like that of DTH.

Overall, then, the present project will stress three issues largely unaddressed in theories of documentary film, both stemming from the tradition of understanding documentary as an arbiter of (historical) truth(s): first, the documentary's role as a text characterized by instrumentality in the public sphere (its function *rhetorically*); second, documentary's function as a persuasive text that can authorize and legitimize certain histories as "truth" by its persistent presence in the public sphere (its function *epistemologically*); and third, the role of more general cinematic conventions in making its public statements seem more like "truth" for various audiences.

Let us now turn to the history of documentary, to see part of the origins of a situation like that of *The War*.

[32] Ibid.

CHAPTER 1:

Documentary Discourse:
Historical Approaches to Documentary

The example of the Latino/Chicano reaction to *The War* has introduced what is at stake in the documentary film, and it has set up where documentary filmmaking has from its inception been set apart from other forms of production of visual representation. From the first, the history of documentary film (and how that history is told by scholars) has highlighted its connections to larger questions of knowledge, power, ideology, and hegemony. Yet over its history, the documentary film has often also been seen as being instrumental rather than persuasive. That is, how the documentary genre functions in the public sphere has been understood as an instrumental discourse with relatively straightforward truth claims and aesthetics.

This chapter will present a brief examination of how the history of documentary film in the public sphere as is most conventionally told in order to challenge that picture as unnecessarily limited, even if historically justified. This chapter thus does not intend to present anything like a complete history of the genre, but rather it aims to identify

some larger trends of how documentary film has been most widely understood in the public sphere, and particularly by filmmakers, audiences, and historians.

How the documentary has understood itself is critical to seeing what is at stake in redefining documentary as a public dialogue rather than as a work. Documentary studies has only recently been institutionalized, and documentary history is relatively new and focused heavily on the non-fiction films of the 1980s and beyond rather than interrogating earlier models for the genre.[33] This is due in part to the fact that first theorists of documentary were its practitioners, rather than academic scholars and much of those original works are only now surfacing or being recovered. As such the history of the genre continues to be rewritten as primary sources, written by both directors and scholars become available. For example, in the preface to *A Paul Rotha Reader*, Duncan Petrie and Robert Kruger legitimize the importance of their anthology by claiming that while Rotha's written work was once "a standard in film history and theory, since his death in 1984, appreciation of his contribution to film-making and particularly to the development of film theory and criticism has gradually drifted into obscurity."[34] Such statements recur in much of the work on the documentary, showing how scholarly efforts has been dedicated to collecting and basic evaluation rather than more comprehensive interpretations of documentary over and against other kinds of representations.

The goal of the chapter is to establish the relatively limited perspectives that documentarians and their historians have had of the genre, due to the historical evolution

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[33] See among others, Charles Musser, *Documentary Before Verite,* "Film History," volume 18, 355-60. John Library Publishing, 2006, 1.
[34] Duncan Petrie and Robert Kruger, eds., *A Paul Rotha Reader,* UK: University of Exeter Press, 1999.

of the field. As we shall see below, many statements about the documentary's history frame the genre in terms of instrumentality, asking what kind of public memory a documentary representation was intended to create and how the act of creation was influenced by changing production and media technology. This outline will, then, set up the scholarly and theoretical approaches to the truth production, and ideologies of the documentary films that will be the topic of chapter 2 below.

There is an incredibly limited number of texts dedicated to the history of documentary filmmaking, the emergence of which benchmarked the nascent stage of documentary as a formulized academic area of study.[35] My goal with this chapter is to use this selection of texts establish the major waypoints in the accepted history of documentary production, against which theories about the genre will be discussed in chapter two. These primary texts include Jack C. Ellis and Betsy A. McClane's *A New History of Documentary Film,* Erik Barnouw, *Documentary, A History of the Non-Fiction Film, and* Michael Chanan's *The Politics of Documentary.*

In these dedicated historical texts on documentary, scholars seem to want to institutionalize the canon and history of the documentary genre(s) in fairly traditional ways, as demonstrated in the seminal history texts of documentary film, including Erik Barnouw's classic *Documentary, a History of Nonfiction Film* (1993 [orig. 1974]), and *A New History of Documentary Film* by Jack C. Ellis and Betsy A. McLane (2006

[35] Jack C. Ellis and Betsy A. McClane, *A New History of Documentary Film* (New York: Continuum International Publishing Group, 2005); and Erik Barnouw, *Documentary, A History of the Non-Fiction Film* (New York: Oxford Univesity Press, 1993), Michael Chanan, *The Politics of Documentary* (London: British Film Institute, 2009).

[orig.1997]).[36] Originally published in 1974, Erik Barnouw was the first to trace the history of documentary in a scholarly text, which he has brought up to date in the newest edition (1993) to include more recent trends in documentary and newer technologies, yet without really changing the volume's theoretical premises. More recently, Ellis and McLane's work presents a comprehensive history of English-speaking documentary film, which highlights how changes in technology engendered the various waves and movements in the trajectory of documentary film. Of note in this context is also Chris Holmlund and Cynthia Fuch's presentation of the history of GLBT documentary in the anthology *Between the Sheets, In the Streets, Queer, Lesbian, Gay Documentary* (1997).[37] These histories are clear analogues to the major theories of documentary since the 1970s, preserving a fairly limiting image of what documentary is, as I shall argue in chapter 2.

One history needs special note, however. Two parts history, and one part theory, Michael Chanan's *The Politics of Documentary* (2009) is exemplary in its attention to documentary history and theory from a global context -- it in many ways represents the best practical approach to documentary today, as it is rooted equally in both academic theory and industry practice. Chanan's book is an excellent primer for anyone interested in documentary film studies, as it covers the major movements of the genre in history, as well as the major arguments relevant to each. Ultimately, he argues that documentary

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[36] Erik Barnouw, *Documentary, A History of the Non-Fiction Film,* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993, 2nd ed. [orig.1974]; Jack C. Ellis and Betsy A. McLane, *A New History of Documentary Film*, New York: Continuum International Publishing Group, 2006.

[37] Chris Holmlund and Cynthia Fuchs, *Between the Sheets, In the Streets, Queer, Lesbian, Gay Documentary* (Minneapolis: University of Minneapolis Press, 1997).

films do not only *represent* time and space, but also *organize* them actively, a gesture which effectively facilitates new public discourse and can embolden audiences into political action.

Just as it will be for the historical discussions in this chapter, Chanan's move is particularly important for the present project, because he is both a filmmaker and a theorist, one whose scholarship presents an elegant synthesis of both. However, despite its attempt to create a comprehensive volume on both, he inevitably short-changes each -- a weakness to be expected in any single presentation that claims global relevance. Nonetheless, that notion of how documentary *produces* truth rather than reproduces it is more clearly represented in Chanan's work than it is anywhere else in documentary theory.

Let us now turn to an outline of how scholars have presented it, in order to show the definitions of documentary in each, as a prelude to more nuanced discussions of the ontology of the documentary.

The 1920s: Grierson and Flaherty

While slice of life film photography was known from the very first years of the medium, the documentary emerged in the 1920s defined as something other than the entertainment driven narratives of fiction film.

As historians of documentary film acknowledge, John Grierson (UK) and Robert Flaherty (US) were the first prominent documentary filmmakers, as their films, theories,

and production techniques heavily informed this nascent stage of documentary film in the 1920s. Although newsreel footage and other documentary like moving images (most notably, those produced by the Lumière Brothers, among others), were being captured and shown, Grierson and Flaherty's films were the first documentaries that got mass distribution for theatrical release. Both filmmakers were working in opposition to the studio systems, as Grierson had an agenda for using the medium for education rather than entertainment, and Flaherty wanted to craft stories outside of the protocols set forth by the industry (large budgets and large crews, among others). While Flaherty was famous for creating travelogues about indigenous communities, Grierson focused on the politics of industrialized city life from within a government run film department. They are historicized as belonging to opposite poles within the documentary genre due to differences their creative and pragmatic approach to the medium's instrumentality in the public sphere. A closer look into each filmmaker will show some issues in the way they have been written into history that reveal larger fallacies in documentary discourse, that we will pick up in the following chapter.

The discourses surrounding this new institutionalized film form that introduced it to the public are most often traced to John Grierson, the father of the 1930s British documentary movement, who coined the term "documentary" and was the first filmmaker who privileged the medium's social and political instrumentality (how it might be used for political ends).[38] While other socially minded documentaries were being produced

[38] The case for the political uses of feature films reaches back at least to Sergei Eisenstein (1898-1948) and his theories of the montage.

around the world, Grierson's documentary project was rare in its explicit design for educating the public for social reform while working with and within the state.[39] Grierson is best known for his early films, *Drifters* (Grierson 1929) and *Night Mail* (Grierson 1936), which, like most "documentary" films at the time, utilized non-professional actors to create a feeling of authenticity for the audience.

Specifically, Grierson conceived his larger documentary project during the inter-war period (between WWI and WWII), when he began promoting the genre as the best medium for informing the war-torn public about social-political issues, as well as for galvanizing the public to participate in their countries' democratic process. In fact attributes his concept of documentary's instrumentality as an educational force to important journalist and commentator Walter Lippman, author of *Public Opinion* (1922). He met Lippman on a Rockefeller grant that allowed him to pursue graduate research on public opinion and mass media.[40] In his essay on "Propaganda and Education: Grierson writes,

> It was Mr. Lippman himself who turned this educational research in the direction of film. He mentioned that we would do better to follow the dramatic patterns of the film through the changing character of our time. . . A theory purely education became a thereby a theory involving the directive use of film. That directive use was based on two essential factors: the observation of the ordinary or the actual, and the discovery with the actual of the patterns which have it significance for civic education.[41]

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[39] For more information about Grierson's documentaries and theories see, among others, John Grierson, *Grierson on Documentary*, Forsyth Hard, ed.Berkely and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1966; Brian Winston, *Claiming the Real II, Documentary: Grierson and Beyond,* London: Palgrave Macmillian, 1995. It must also be noted that feature filmmakers of the era like Sergei Eisenstein also argued for the educational potential of their genre.

[40] Ellis and McLane, "A New History," 57-8.

[41] Grierson, "On Documentary," 290.

It was with this idea that Grierson joined the EMD (Empire Marketing Board), and shortly thereafter compelled the British state to set up a government film unit ("The GPO Unit," under the auspices of the General Post Office). He worked in the GPO as a filmmaker and administrator until 1933, when the unit was disbanded due to the floundering economy. During his time at the GPO, Grierson recruited a group of promising young filmmakers who learned the craft collectively and later became the core of the British Documentary Film Movement. Importantly, Grierson sought private funding avenues as well as public ones, and he utilized schools and community centers among other public venues to screen films instead of relying on theaters for exhibition.[42]

Grierson's British school of filmmakers worked in opposition to the socially minded documentaries that were being produced in other countries just prior to and contemporaneously with Britain in the 1920s, as well as nonfiction cinema that he saw as designed for entertainment instead of education. In the first category were the era's Soviet films, which were socially minded, but which, unlike Grierson's films, were revolutionary in their explicit use of the medium to create propaganda - a historical move that first explicitly aligned documentary films with persuasive speech, albeit not with any sense of dialogue.[43] These Soviet documentary films were designed to support the revolutionary ideologies of Marxism and socialism, and as a result, they have been marginalized in history, as origin points for the propaganda machine used internationally during the world wars, especially WWII.

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[42] Ellis and McLane, "A New Hisotry,"73.

[43] For more information on the 1920s era of Soviet films please see, among others, Ellis and McClane, Beginnings: The Soviets and Political Indoctrination 1922-1929.

From the first, then, documentary film tried to restrict its own canon. In one sense all governments in the interwar era were exploring the medium to shape public opinion, but the Soviets purportedly used it to an extreme, to indoctrinate the public into the socialist ideology. Yet at the same time, new forms of documentary were arising: importantly, the bourgeoning of anthropological documentaries widely known as travelogues, like *Nanook of the North* (Flaherty, 1922) and *Chang* (Cooper and Schoedsack, 927).[44] Grierson saw these films as entertainment driven, like the studio-made narrative films which he worked against, and he framed them strictly in opposition to his own work, because they took no explicit perspective on social or political issues in the public sphere – thereby they lacked instrumentality in his reading.[45] Thus by working with the state to realize his own vision of "appropriate" documentary form, Grierson took a moderate stance between these movements, institutionalizing the medium as a social and political intervention – rather than for entertainment or to galvanize revolutionary support.

Although widely lauded, Grierson and members of his group were subject to criticism precisely for his theories of documentary's instrumentality, which aligned filmmaking with the state and with commercial interests of private funders, unlike the independent studio films made at that time. Despite Grierson's personal leftist leanings, he was also often critiqued by more radical members of the film community for working within the system instead of working for change outside of it. These more radical

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[44] For more information on this era of documentary film, please see, among others, Jack C. Ellis and Betsy A. McClane, *A New History of Documentary Film* New York: Continuum International Publishing Group, 2005, "Beginnings: The Americans and Popular Anthropology," 1922-29.
[45] Grierson, *On Documentary*, 13.

filmmaker-critics were advancing class-based analyses of social problems in the genre from production companies like Kino Films and the Worker's Film and Photo League.[46]

While Grierson was critiqued on one side for inadequately reformist politics, he was also critiqued for subordinating aesthetics to instrumentality, another trope recurring in the history of documentary. In comparison to fiction film, the documentarian has supposedly always been more tolerant of poor aesthetics, as long as footage served the films's narrative and message (a preference probably due in part to early associations of documentaries with newsreels and the utility of "run and gun" shooting). Yet Grierson himself was not averse to paying attention to aesthetics in documentary filmmaking.[47] For example, when Grierson was directing his most notable film, *Drifters* (1929),[48] about fisherman, he recalled his thoughts about labor while shooting the seamen: "As the catch was being boxed and barreled I thought I would like to say that what was really being boxed and barreled was the labor of men."[49] While this shows Grierson's use of visual metaphor to underscore a political point, he felt overall that aesthetics should not be used for beauty in itself. Aesthetics were simply to be utilitarian, tools to help craft and deliver a film's social and political message: the veracity of the image was supposed to galvanize and educate the public.

Historically, Grierson's reputation does not live up to his stated goals. He is not remembered for his use of political instrumentality in documentary, unlike his

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[46] Chanan, "The Politics of," 143.
[47] In fact his written work and theory addressed aesthetics, which we will return to in the following chapter.
[48] First screened in tandem with Eisenstein's *Battleship Potemkin* at its UK premiere.
[49] Grierson, 138.

contemporary Robert Flaherty, the purported US father of documentary, who is remembered for his evolution of cinematography as visual prose. Where Grierson worked in overt opposition to the apolitical life of popular cinema at the time, Flaherty sought to bring the theater audience into parts of the world they had never seen.[50] Flaherty's approach to documentary film as educating through entertainment was an outgrowth of his work in and intellectual curiosity about anthropology. For instance, his film *Nanook of the North* follows an Inuit family in Alaska; it is known as the first commercially successful feature length documentary film in the US (Flaherty, 1922).[51] Flaherty's approach to this film has set his image as a filmmaker, as it also set up the two founders of the field as operating on different sides of a convenient dichotomy: the educator-instrumentalist, versus the artist (with both set in opposition to the propagandists, especially Soviet ones, by historians of the genre).

An example can clarify what is at stake in these categorizations. For example, *Nanook* is often criticized for inadequacies as documentary. Although advertised by its maker as "truthful," the production techniques blurred the boundaries between documentary and fiction film, as it staged and reenacted events and used scripts to create drama in the film's narrative. This paradox between truth telling and entertainment is most concisely seen in *Nanook's* movie poster, where the tagline reads "A Story of Love and Life in the Actual Arctic," underneath a banner that declares, "The Truest and Most

[50] Ibid, 20.
[51] Barnow, 32.

Human Story of the Great White Snows. A picture with more drama, greater thrill, and stronger action than any picture you ever saw."[52]

In fact, subsequent research has clarified that the majority of the film was staged, including the film's dramatic conclusion where the family is shown in peril, fighting against time to find build shelter or risk impending death. The film is also criticized for perpetuating post-colonial stereotypes of "third world" people, reifying representations of their "savagery" and exoticism.[53] However, such criticism is somewhat displaced: due to the limitations in production equipment at the time, all documentaries utilized at least some fiction film techniques. Specifically due to the era's heavy cameras (which required tripods as well as lighting) and to the lack of synch sound, documentaries were often shot in studios, where they borrowed techniques of reenactment. Yet Flaherty defended his documentary approach to the film in 1947, after its theatrical re-release in London, as quoted by The New York Times article, *Pioneer's Return:*

> There is more to documentary flavor than authentic backgrounds. The people and their problems have to be real too. You can not superimpose studio-fabricated plots n an actual setting without finding that the reality of the background will show up in the artificiality of your story.[54]

However, this statement shows how Flaherty cloaked his fiction film techniques in a rhetoric of actuality which is retrospectively ironic, given that he built a fake igloo for Nanook, to allow for proper lighting in what otherwise were untenable conditions for

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[52] Ibid.

[53] Ironically, it is rumored that Flaherty impregnated the woman who played the wife and mother of the family featured in the story, and it is alleged that he never claimed financial or personal responsibility for his child.

[54] "Pioneers Return," by Ezra Goodman, *The New York Times, August 31, 1947*.

shooting.[55] Thus Flaherty's reenactments of his subjects' lives fictionalized their stories within a particular national aesthetic of authenticity or actuality, and it adopted that aesthetic to realize the ultimate goal of entertaining audiences rather than politicizing them.

Flaherty clearly did not share Grierson's ideas of instrumentality as paramount in documentary, and instead worked towards creating beautiful images, while working away from the studio system. In the same *New York Times* article quoted, above, Flaherty says:

> Europe is fed up with luxury pictures. There is a whole new attitude about life developing. Poole are getting down to stern realities. A picture like "Nanook," which has to do with a people's survival and the fundamental struggle for food and the necessities of life, fits into the present-day scene in a very contemporary fashion.[56]

This quotation shows how he claims a lack of social and political context for the Inuit Alaskan family in the film, where their struggles for survival were far removed from the postwar realities of Europe. Thus the film cannot be defined, he feels, as an intervention into the public sphere. In more modern (and rhetorical) terms, he casts it instead as a story based on pathos, rather than ethos -- it is a portrait designed to evoke interest and sympathy rather than a hard news piece or propaganda trying to convince. Richard Leacock, pioneer of the direct cinema movement and student of Flaherty's method (and his close friend), explains that Flaherty was a "humanist, he admired people who very

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[55] Richard Leacock, *In Defense of the Flaherty Tradition*, essay written April 27, 1990 [website] http://richardleacock.com/21185/In-Defense-of-the-Flaherty-Tradition.
[56] Ibid.

good at what they did, whether they be an Eskimo building an Igloo, glass blowers in industrial Britain or roughnecks on a modern oil-rig."[57]

Flaherty's opposition to the studio system was thus not a political choice but an aesthetic one, reflected in his own methods as a filmmaker. For example, he chose not to use a full crew and to shoot and edit his own work in the field (as to seeing rushes), among other practices that defied standard conventions at the time. Notably, *Nanook* was funded by Révillon Frères of Paris, well known furriers.[58] If there is instrumentality in Flaherty's films, then, it lay in his ability to represent human experience and observation through beautiful images, which in the case of *Nanook* worked to the advantage of his corporate funders.

Thus these two prominent figures in documentary film history and theory set the pattern for how documentarians represented themselves and for the how and why such films were to be made. The poles were public service (commercial/state funded) versus entertainment (privately funded), each its own kind of instrumental justification and limitations on the veracity of their moving images. Although both figures agree that some form of manipulation is present in the "truth telling" of documentary work, Flaherty's work is more closely derivative of narrative films. From today's perspective, his work might be more properly seen as the precursor for docudramas than documentary. In contrast, Grierson devised a documentary project that claimed the medium's educational potential as its instrumental purpose, as he sought to bolster private

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[57] Ibid.
[58] Richard Leacock, Yamagata Speech, *In Defense of Flaherty*.

engagement in the public sphere. This position, in turn, required Grierson also to be an ardent author on the subject, and thus one can assume he saw his writing and teaching as part of his larger project of public service. Within most histories of documentary films, therefore, Grierson's legacy set public service as the goal of documentary, an idea that lives on in his legacy of films, teachings, and writings as well as in the work of new generations of "Griersonians."

Grierson's instrumentality principle for documentaries (including his willingness to work with governments) set a precedent for documentarians of the following decades. The documentarian became a voice of authority marked by a commitment to social issues (especially to revealing the economic and political struggles going on in America, Europe, and Latin American, which led issues of labor, poverty, and war to predominate in the medium); the documentary itself became aligned with (government-supported) education, and with propaganda (in its purportedly perverted form). The infrastructure confirms this alignment: the Eastman Kodak Company began manufacturing 16mm projectors which made screenings easily accessible to church halls, classrooms, and the like. Compared to their European counterparts, then, American documentary films of this foundational era were often less focused on effecting the political and economic spheres, and thus also were able to continue in the vein of Flaherty to create epic visual poems for theatergoers. Where harsh realities of American life during the depression were represented on screen, then, their narrative concluded with a happy ending.

Although some independent documentaries surfaced around issues of labor, they were not screened by the masses, but in localized centers for community interaction.[59]

The development of the documentary as an independent kind of filmmaking suffered from this origin for years. In the post-war period, documentaries that were more properly classified as educational and industrial films predominated, owed largely to ways the nation embraced film for education and propaganda during WWII, as extensions of the era's newsreel footage. In this framing, the camera became identified as a scientific instrument, heavily promoted for use in the public school system for education as revealing of "truth," with the filmmakers themselves claiming vision or possession of that perspective. Such uses of the documentary continued into the "Golden Age" of documentary film in the 1960s. Even the rise of the televised documentary after 1951 was marked by these assumptions, even when its critics came to invent the new form of documentary, direct cinema/*cinéma vérité* in the 1960's.

The New Stylistics of *Vérité*: The Documentary on Television

The post war period of documentary had started as a fairly bleak state of affairs in the US, until the 1950-60s, which become known as the "golden age" of documentary.[60] At this moment, documentary techniques and stories were widely adopted in television

[59] Ellis and McClane, "A New History." 77.

[60] For more information on the dawn of the televised documentary please see, among others, Jack C. Ellis and Betsy A. McLane, *A New History of Documentary Film* (New York: The Continuum International Publishing Group Inc., 2006),179-195; Erik Barnouw, *Documentary, A History of the Non-Fiction Film* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 221-228.

programming, thereby institutionalizing documentary in the US in new ways, giving new modes to its instrumentality.

In the highly regarded *New History of Documentary Film*, for instance, the authors Jack C. Ellis and Betsy A. McLane date the golden age of documentary to the period from 1951 to 1971 because of the proliferation of new television stations, broadcasting to the growing numbers of families with increasing numbers of television sets at home: "[B]y 1950 one hundred stations telecast to four million sets."[61] They also note that, in 1953, the Public Broadcasting Service (PBS) was born (originally named National Education Television – NET), which took as part of its mission the continued support of documentary films as part of news and public service, a decision which helped keep the genre alive by institutionalizing it within its programming and funding agendas. Importantly, when these programs began, they were packaged as news, not like the long-form documentaries seen currently on PBS or the History channel, among others. Ellis and McLane continue: "[NET's] budgets tended to be smaller than those of the commercial networks, but it made up for this by purchasing independently produced documentaries and importing many significant documentary programs and series from abroad, primarily from Britain."[62]

The documentary's move to television was accompanied with stylistic shifts that created an aesthetic outside the studio films. The hallmark of earlier documentaries had been the use of voice over-narration to tell the story, while never revealing the narrator's

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[61] Jack C. Ellis and Betsy A. McLane, *A New History of Documentary Film* (New York: The Continuum International Publishing Group Inc., 2006), 181.
[62] Ibid.

face or identity to the camera -- what is often referred to as the "voice of god" narration. However, this new era of the television documentary moved closer to the style of news casting, where, generally, the opening and closing segments were filmed "live" on set and featured celebrity hosts and commentators such as Edward R. Murrow and Walter Cronkite, among others, who had established roles in news broadcasting.

A notable example of these programs was *CBS Reports,* which began in 1959, and was originally hosted by Edward R. Murrow. The perceived credibility of these anchors added to the perception of legitimacy or truth in the programs, in no small part due to the persuasive power inherent in the newscasters' celebrity status of the newscasters as reporters and reliable witnesses. This can be seen in Murrow's large viewership, which increased during his run of the program *CBS Reports.*[63] Murrow would act as narrator and commentator to various issues the show tackled each week.

Framed as news reporting, then, the instrumentality of these programs was defined as the network's unbiased effort to inform the public. That claim emerges clearly in the best known of the *CBS Reports* series, when Murrow introduced the now infamous *Harvest of Shame* (1960), which examined the plight of the migrant farm worker and set off a political firestorm. Murrow's status as news celebrity and role as a public watchdog was so threatening that the program "drew outraged protests by the agriculture industry." Ellis and McLane point out:

> television created the illusion, and stressed it, that all of it was "live," though of course most of it was not. . . The celebrity commentators fed into and emphasized the quality of liveness. The audience tuned into to see what Ed was offering on a

[63] Ibid.

> Friday night. He talked directly to us from the control room, his reporters available to come in over the monitors as he called on them.[64]

Like the first generation of documentary filmmakers who underplayed their use of recreations and scenes filmed on set, this generation of documentarians emphasized that the shows were "live" and thus claimed less mediation of the content, while bolstering their claims of objectivity.[65] Thus documentary space became the space of the news authority, guaranteed by the celebrity news status of the broadcasters, and the programs' claims to being shot "live." All these practices perpetuated the image of the documentary as representing the truth to its new audience in TV land. Both Grierson's claim for an instrumentality of education and Flaherty's use of aesthetic representation were claims that were seeming suppressed behind a new alignment of the documentary with news, a genre that was largely not presenting a critical analysis of events or utilizing a cinematic aesthetic.

The funding for these TV documentaries came form both private and state sources, which again potentially limited the instrumentality of the genre -- the documentary was news, but not necessarily critical. Interestingly, Ellis and McLane note that the uproar over *Harvest of Shame* was unusual, claiming that Murrorw's approach to this program actually deviated from his standard "non-biased" presentation. They explain the standards of the era: "Perhaps out of courteous respect for us (the audience), the commentator's own point of view in what was said and in what was chosen to be

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[64] Ibid., 191.

[65] Ibid. The authors note the first program of this kind, *See It Now! (1953-8)*, which was "shot more as if they were being captured live and undirected than they were in earlier documentaries."

shown was generally withheld, or balanced or maybe just ambivalent, and therefore ambiguous."[66] Nonetheless, the structural politics of agricultural work emerged clearly.

A fact that the history authors do not address, however, points to a different framing for this generation's documentary: the fact that *CBS Reports* was derived from Morrow's original series, *See it Now!*, a televised version of his radio show of the same name that infamously challenged McCarthy in a broadcast that was a catalyst to ending the McCarthy trials.[67] CBS had given Morrow *carte blanche* over the earlier program, but finding Morrow's programs to be too expensive and politically risky, they cancelled the show and replaced it with *CBS Reports,* wherein "the network diffused the responsibility for documentary telecasts and Mr. Murrow's authority was reduced."[68] As was the political instrumentality of the documentaries shown, which moved somewhat further from news.

Although Ellis and McLane do not address the issue of funding such programs, it is important to the television context, as filmmaker Richard Leacock surmises, "they want to own what they show, if they give money for production they want control."[69] This may be why Ellis and McLane explain that the films of the era "centered not only on individuals but on values (ethical, spiritual, psychological) rather than on material

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[66] Ibid., 191.
[67] The New York Times Obituary, *Edward R Murrow, Broadcaster and Ex-Chief of U.S.I.A., Dies*, The New York Times April 28, 1965, http://webcache.googleusercontent.com/search?q=cache:zYBgFk80X30J:www.nytimes.com/learning/general/onthisday/bday/0425.html+Edward+Murrow+network+controversy+Harvest+of+Shame&cd=6&hl=en&ct=clnk&gl=us&client=firefox-a&source=www.google.com [website accessed 7-4-11.
[68] Ibid.
[69] Richard Leacock, *A Search for the Feeling of Being There*, [website accessed 7-1-11] http://www.richardleacock.com/asearchforthefeelingofbeingthere, 1997, 4.

concerns (work, housing, poverty), as did earlier documentaries."[70] Thus by privileging the story of the individual struggle and what came to be known as American values, such filmmakers did not have to address directly the social and political systems that created those struggles – the safest line for any financial backer, who would not want a repeat of the controversy around *Harvest of Shame.* In essence, the TV documentary created the singular subject of its attention, where earlier generations had worked toward collective subjects.

This range of "documentary" types on TV again highlights aesthetic choices in documentary techniques. These news documentaries created images imbued with the conventions of realism and "liveness," designed to project what often was virtually a fictionalized reality in the form of non-fiction films and news, with heavy truth claims for the genre's representations. The style elements of these documentaries evolved as well: the narrator of the program was visible, light-weight equipment allowed shooting in the field, while studio cameras were used to film more interviews than seen previously. Ellis and McLane state:

> Television documentaries also had to fit into quite precise airtimes, down to the second, allowing pauses for and building structures to accommodate the commercial breaks. The running times of the earlier documentaries varied considerably and were determined, to considerable extend at least, by the content of the film. The fixed times of television resulted in some strains, with insufficient time available to deal adequately with each subject.[71]

Thus televised documentary programs created somewhat of a template for filmed documentaries adhering to guidelines set forth by the station.

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[70] Ibid.
[71] Ibid, 193.

That situation persists today, both in documentary and in various forms of reality television. For example, a Ken Burns film, a segment of his documentary series, or even shows like *Cops!* begin each production with a narrative template for crafting their story arcs, one which must fit into the rigid requirements set up by the broadcaster who is airing the film. That frame in turn dictates how the story must be broken up temporally – into segments - so it meets the expectations of a television viewing audience and the broadcast conventions of the respective network (PBS or network, usually). All of these stylistic markers become associated with the genre's truth claims and they become industry standards for a viewing generation, as they are transmitted across the nation via the coaxial cable.

This new era of documentary on television around Murrow's work helped breathe life back into a genre that had become dry and predictable in educational settings. New visual and time conventions now characterized TV documentaries and differentiated them from theatrical releases. Where documentary had always been marginalized in theaters, set off from fiction film, it was now being split into two camps, between televised and theatrical films, as well.

Documentary filmmakers for television were limited in the experience they were able to create for their audience, as this era preceded projection TVs and the surround sound available to consumers today. Thus the institutionalization of the documentary film in television dictated very different organizing structures for storytelling, as well as for the aesthetic and narrative codes governing the films' designs and production norms.

Notably, those codes also vary between stations, particularly PBS versus other channels. Enter the rule breakers.

The 1960s Direct Cinema and Cinéma Vérité

TV documentary had almost abandoned aesthetic experimentation, as it became heavily entwined with news divisions and their truth claims. Not surprisingly, reaction set in against it on the world stage.

The *cinéma vérité* (French for *film truth*) and direct cinema movements were international revolutions in documentary filmmaking, making greatly expanded truth claims based on the filmmakers' production techniques. *Cinéma vérité* is a term commonly misused in popular culture, where it is often seen as synonymous with "non-directed filmmaking." That definition, however, more accurately fits direct cinema, the American counter-part to *vérité* associated in the US with Richard Leacock.[72]

Jean Rouch created *cinéma vérité* based on the belief that the camera is never a neutral arbiter of truth, but rather an active participant in its creation. A Rouch style filmmaker thus used his camera very transparently, signaled to the viewer through a heavy use of interviews, discussion, and "a fictional sort of improvisation."[73] In contrast, direct cinema is defined by the idea that, with the new portable cameras, the documentary crew could be non-obtrusive and thus capture truth through direct observation -- capturing what they found instead of scripting it. These filmmakers did not use first

[72] Ellis and McLane, "A New History," 217.
[73] Ibid.

person interviews, narration, actors, or scene direction by a director, and aimed instead to capture the "truth" of their subjects in their normal environment, doing their normal activities.[74] The pioneers of direct cinema cast their role as objective observers in the creation of their films – as "flies on the wall" - an epistemological and aesthetic position that problematized the role of the filmmaker in the film's instrumentality through an ethos in production technique and style.

That direct cinema was most influential in the US seems to follow in the national alignment of documentary with news representations, as far as its association with truth-telling, not just with the technical advances pointed to by most historians, to be sure, the genre's pioneers were the engineers of that technology, such as Albert Maysles (of the Maysles Brothers), Richard Leacock, and D.A. Pennebaker. In the early 1960s these filmmakers designed new 16mm cameras that were light enough to operate with a shoulder mount, had film and lenses that accommodated low-light shooting, and were sound-synched via portable tape recorders.[75] These innovations marked a major technological shift in filmmaking, particularly for documentary filmmakers, who now had the flexibility of shooting in areas previously made inaccessible by the cumbersome size and sound limitations of older cameras.

Importantly, these new technologies also allowed the umbilical cord between the camera operator and sound person to be cut through the introduction of crystal synch,

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[74] For more information on the *cinéma vérité* and direct cinema movements, among other documentary film movements discussed in this chapter, please see, among others: Eric Barnouw, *Documentary, A History of the Non-Fiction Form* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 231-252; Jack C. Ellis and Betsy A. McLane, *A New History of Documentary Film* (New York: Continuum, 2006), 208-226; Michael Chanan, *The Politics of Documentary* (London: British Film Institute, 2009),166-183.
[75] Stubbs, "Documentary Filmmakers," 41.

which enabled the sound person to no longer be tethered to the camera (while wireless microphone systems were introduced in the late 60s, they were not preferred due to limitations of quality of that technology at the time). These technical changes led to many sound-driven narratives, or films "cut to sound" rather than "cut to picture," which exemplifies how technological innovations also led to stylistic innovations and new conventions for communicating with their viewers. In these cases, it became possible to choose to establish continuity between shots *either* by following the visual material *or* the soundtrack.[76] The most important innovations of this era were the camera's lightweight and new capacity for filmmakers to capture natural sound as it happened, synched to picture.

As such, these technological shifts granted filmmakers greater mobility, which in turn engendered a more secure role for the practice of direct cinema. The filmmakers positioned themselves as observers, supposedly rejecting any authority or mediation inherent to their roles in production – a claim to truth-telling that became marked by what became the genre's hallmark stylistic choices. Direct cinema is generally characterized stylistically, according to most scholars, by the use of handheld or shoulder mounted cameras, as well as long takes, and an absence of explicit mediation vis-à-vis commentary or narration -- it thus in its own way privileged the epistemological stance of "truth telling" that had marked the documentaries of the previous era.[77] Some of these

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[76] Chanan, "The Politics of Documentary,"166-72.

[77] Interestingly, these stylistic choices are derivative of a short-lived British film movement in the mid-fifties – British Free Cinema (56-59), which also used lightweight cameras, and was essentially a movement and community formed of independent filmmakers who felt alienated from the mainstream British documentary movement. For more information on British Free Cinema, please see

practices have carried over into narrative films as well, such as when we see handheld camera work used to suggest something real or more "truthful," like in the camerawork of the often cited opening scene of *Saving Private Ryan* (1998), where Spielberg's operators used handheld camera to create a feeling of increased realism for the viewer.

The group of journalist and filmmakers that worked under Drew Associates were the pioneers of direct cinema, whose members defined this generation of documentary filmmaking. The group's members were curated by Robert Drew, and included D.A. Pennebaker, Albert Mayseles, and Richard Leacock, among others. The group was renowned for its modifications to existing 16mm cameras, to make them more lightweight and shoulder mounted for the greatest mobility and most "non-intrusive" practice – although this fact is often omitted from film histories and "American technical history."[78] Their first film, *Primary* (1960), was met with critical acclaim, as it shed light on the political system through the 1960 Wisconsin Democratic primary election between Hubert H. Humphrey and John F. Kennedy.

Despite general acknowledgment of the group's contributions to evolving the documentary film genre and their commitment to actuality through non-intrusive filmmaking practices, there seems to be a lack of attention to the ideological tenets of Drew and his group. Yet they were working animatedly against what they saw as flaws in the documentary process and in the limits of documentary made for broadcast.

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http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Free_Cinema, among others. This movement represents another hole in documentary history, as its link to direct cinema and cinéma vérité has yet to be properly historicized (and commonly goes unmentioned), a glaring omission made by historians, including Bryan Winston, in his documentary history, "Claiming the Reel," among others.

[78] Bryan Winston, *Claiming the Reel* (London: British Film Institute, 2008), 148.

In his essay "An Independent within the Networks," Robert Drew remembers the first year he worked as an Executive Producer for television: “Television was reaching more and more people, but its documentary films were not reaching me. However interesting I might find the subject matter, I dozed off in the middle of the documentary program.”[79] Drew conceived of a new form of documentary that would reveal a more complex portrait of human existence though non-intrusive filmmaking. Drew worked most closely with Richard Leacock in solidifying the tenets of direct cinema, but worked collectively with his group to put these theories into filmmaking practice. Members of Drew Associates eventually moved on to their own projects and paths as filmmakers.

While historians like to claim Drew’s group as being either Griersonian or derivative of Flaherty, we may now say that Drew’s vision of this new form of documentary actually divided its interest: it accepted a Griersonian instrumentality, yet saw their camera work in terms closer to Flaherty's. Drew wanted to create content that informed the public, but to accomplish that aim by aligning documentary closer to fiction films, through more complex portraits of people, what he saw as more truthful representations, and narrative techniques of shooting and putting the story together. His marriage of instrumentality within the public sphere and the entertainment-driven narrative is often left out of history books that (generally) overlook the invaluable writings of both Drew and Leacock.

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[79] Robert L. Drew, “An Independent Within the Networks,” from Alan Rosenthall’s *New Considerations for Documentary*, 389.

Drew's redefinition of the documentary as highlighting the act of filmmaking is nonetheless a significant move justifying an enhanced image for the filmmaker. In the same essay Drew writes about how Grierson saw the movie theater as the best place to inform the public, using "technology and filmmaking to give the millions the commonly shared experience necessary to the workings of their democracies."[80] In the Grierson tradition, Drew explains his vision for direct cinema in parallel terms:

> The right kind of documentary programming will raise more interest than it can satisfy, more questions than it should try to answer. IT should create interests to fuel a multimedia engine for informing, a system for knowing that leads from television to newspapers to books.[81]

Thus Drew adopted the Griersonian stance of instrumentality, wherein the medium is used to educate the public. However, Drew also understood that, in order to captivate the minds of the public, he needed compelling stories and narrative structures, an entertainment driven story arc with beautiful imagery, much like that seen in the work of Flaherty. He felt that the pathos of fiction film and television held the power to persuade and inform, through the "spontaneous" reality of real-life drama:

> Candid photography would capture the spontaneous character and drama that make the real world exciting. Editing would use dramatic logic to convey the excitement of the natural drama captured by the camera.[82]

Thus Drew's vision drew on documentary techniques associated with both Flaherty and Grierson, using the aesthetics of Flaherty to achieve the instrumental aims specified by

[80] Ibid., 392.
[81] Ibid., 393.
[82] Ibid. 392.

Grierson – yet with an entirely new emphasis on truth value through non-obtrusive filmmaking.

The production practices that evolved in the time also reinforced this new emphasis on the filmmaking itself. Drew's main role was as producer, and his partner Richard Leacock, whose primary role was cinematographer, has provided us with a closer look at the practices used by these original practitioners of direct cinema. In the narrative he provides about this filmmaking, Richard Leacock notes that he began making films at an early age, working as cameraman, editor, producer, and director throughout his career. He was close personally and professionally with Robert Flaherty, whom he met as a young boarding school student in a school that Flaherty's daughters attended.[83] It is also significant that, in 1947-8, Richard Leacock worked as cameraman and associate producer on Robert Flahtery's last major film, *Louisiana Story*, which left a major impact on Leacock.) Leacok attended Harvard, where he studied physics in order to master the filmmaking process from the technical end.

Leacock started working with Drew in the 1950s, and when Drew began working full time with ABC, Leacock and Pennebaker began working as filmmaking partners. Leacock later went on to create a new film program at MIT, which nurtured the talent of Ross McElway (*Sherman's March*), among others.

Where Drew was concerned with changing the genre of documentary, Leacock was more concerned with how to achieve the greatest veracity of the documentary image and procedures for direct cinema filmmakers - a question asking about the ethos and

[83] About Richard Leacock, http://richardleacock.com/aboutrichardleacock [website accessed 7-1-11].

pathos of filmmaking. Leacock remembers the set of rules the group outlined in the early 1960s:

> The filmmaking unit was never more than two people, a camera person who hand-held the camera, and a reporter or journalist who carried a small tape-recorder. We never interviewed our subjects, we never asked anyone to do anything for us [no directing subjects or action], we never used lights, we behaved ourselves, dressed appropriately and had a respectful relationship with those that we were filming. There was a minimum of narration which was to convey essential information but not opinions.[84]

This approach is a humanistic one, as Leacock describes Flaherty, as it strives to be the least disruptive possible to the life and physical space of the person being filmed. It also asks the filmmaker to maintain respect and even a personal relationship with the person being filmed, an approach which is aimed to assist in the idea that the camera can eventually become an invisible observer.

From a rhetorical point of view, Leacock is also factoring in the audience, not only the filmmaker. This approach also appeals to the pathos of the subject, allowing them the space to be more openly emotional, and to disclose more about themselves if they trust the filmmakers. Importantly, Leacock's quotation above shows that, while these filmmakers were concerned with creating a narrative that captivates like fiction film, direct cinema practitioners were doing so by discarding the standard practices of the industry such as large film crews, heavy studio equipment and choosing to always be hand-held, among others.

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[84] Richard Leacock, *Looking Forward to the Future,* http://www.richardleacock.com/lookingforwardtothefuture [website] accessed 7-1-11, 4.

While these practitioners are remembered for being purists in regards to their approach to the genre's truth claims, they were in fact very conscious of their own roles in the crafting the story and the problems of their roles as "objective observers." The protocol Leacock outlines above shows that his approach was constructed to help assuage some of the impact of the standard practice of filmmaking and interviews in effecting how the story is captured, with the assumption that, by taking up less space, these filmmakers were less subjective in the process.

In reality, the filmmakers were asserting the importance of their roles as senders of messages in new ways, rather than reconsidering what education through documentary might actually consist of. Certainly, their roles in crafting stories are less overt, as the basic aesthetic of these film asserts, and as we have come to associate with hand-held camera work and long takes, among other stylistic elements. Yet Leacock was very aware of his own role in crafting the story as cameraman: he noted the use of the close up, as he learned from Flaherty, "not so much to reveal detail as to withhold information from the viewer, of the surround, or as [Flaherty] put it, 'the camera is like a horse with blinders, it can only what is in front of its nose' and thus increase the visual tension that requires the viewer to search for the resolution of what they are experiencing."[85] Thus while direct cinema espoused a more truthful representation in documentary film, Leacok and his cohorts were aware of their subjective choices in the field and in the edit. They had thus crafted a new aesthetic to go with their instrumental ethos, but they still had not really accommodated the other side of the potential documentary dialogue, the viewer.

[85] Leacock, "Search for," 3.

Their aesthetic generated a plethora of films. For example, Albert Maysles, also a member of Drew Associates, started his career as a psychology professor at Boston University before moving into filmmaking.[86] Soon after shooting his first film, Albert enlisted the help of his brother David, and the two worked closely together until David's death in 1987, where after Albert continued working as head of *Maysles Films* with Susan Froemke as his collaborative partner. His first documentary feature, *Salesman* (1968), remains a classic, although he is most known for his work on *Grey Gardens, Monterey Pop,* and *Don't Look Back,* among others.

Albert utilized a strict protocol for approaching documentary production in accordance with his vision of direct cinema, one in which he believed very strongly as engendering authenticity and veracity in the representations of his subjects. For example, his website summarizes his approach to documentary, including technical guidelines, such as "Use a manual zoom, not the electric. Never use a tripod. Use no lights, natural light is more authentic."[87] This shows the motivation behind technical approaches to production as a question of ethos, of what makes the film more "truthful" or authentic. He pairs his technical advice with his ethical position, as seen on the same webpage, "Remember, as a documentarian you are an observer, an author but not a director, a discoverer, not a controller."[88] This reveals Maysles approach to direct cinema, shared

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[86] See among others, Liz Stubbs, *Documentary Filmmakers Speak*, chapter 2, 3-21.
[87] Maysels Films: Albert Maysels, "The Documentary," http://www.mayslesfilms.com/albertmaysles/documentary.html [website] accessed 2-4-11. It is also interesting that the fictional films made by Sweden's *Dogme 95* filmmakers followed very similar rules.
[88] Ibid.

by filmmakers of that movement, wherein the filmmaker's point of view is seen as an observer recording a filmic medium for truth telling.

Mayles mirrored this sentiment during an interview available on YouTube, where he explained how his work reveals the truth in terms familiar to the history of documentary film, contrasting it to propaganda films:

> In Propaganda you are committed to a position that you enforce in a very tricky way. You enforce it on people who may not have sufficient information to know any better. Rather I like to give people information to help people work it out for themselves.[89]

In such statements, Maysles showed that he believed his truth telling was in the service of the public sphere, although he maintained that intervention was not born of coercive production techniques, but out of what he believes to be a "pure" form of documentary where truth is instrumental to changing public opinion on social and political issues.

Through his approach to documentary, Mayles informed the international movement of direct cinema, by highlighting their adherence to truth-claims in documentary film representations, moving back to early assumptions about the truth of filmic representations (and photography in general). Thus from the first, the movement underplayed the ways in which documentary stories are constructed representations of reality, even if they are not staged. Yet like Leacock and other direct cinema filmmakers, Mayseles did also acknowledge the subjective role of the filmmaker as the agent producing a representation:

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[89] "30 second excerpt from *Who's Wearing the Emperor's New Clothes* and *My Own Private Revolution*," YouTube, http://www.YouTube.com/watch?v=WBL0Rz9r4_Y&feature=related [website],accessed 6-30-10.

> And the closer I adhere to reality the more honest and authentic my tales. After all, knowledge of the real world is exactly what we need to better understand and therefore possibly to love one another. It's my way of making the world a better place.[90]

Here we see a similar position to Leacock's (and to later documentarians like Ken Burns), which acknowledges the fallaciousness of documentary film's truth claims, while positing that the direct cinema approach is more "honest" and "authentic" and claiming that his work is "making the world a better place," echoing Grierson in wanting to improve the public sphere. This positioning of the filmmaker emerges in his account as much an ethical question as it is one of style, thus making an epistemological claim to veracity of the documentary image.

Other members of the Drew's group were even more animate about defending the truth-claims of direct cinema, including another one of the era's chief pioneers, D.A. Pennebaker (*Don't Look Back* [1967] and *The War Room* [1993], among others), who wrote in the introduction to his book on *Don't Look Back,*

> The cameraman (myself) can only film what happens. There are no retakes. I never attempted to direct or control the action. People said what they wanted and did whatever. The choice of action lay always with the person being filmed.[91]

Here the filmmaker illustrates how the method of shooting, the direct cinema style, is correlated with a purported objectivity in capturing their subjects. This statement is more consistent with the prevailing ideas about direct cinema; Maysles statement above is much less explicit about the role of the filmmaker. The claim that Pennebaker makes here, however, also absolves him of accountability to his subjects, by putting the onus of

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[90] Maysles, "The Documentary."
[91] D.A. Pennebaker, *Don't Look Back,* (New York: Ballantine Books,1968), 8.

action on them, rather than the on the directors, producers, production crew and post-production team that craft the final story. *They* are the agents, not he -- a truth claim reaching back to the very roots of documentary film history.

If the party line is that direct cinema captures a truer image, then the stylistics of the movement also implies a strong association of truth with the film and its message for the audience. This can be seen in the comments of an Amazon.com reviewer after watching *The War Room*:

> What I love the most about this documentary is that there is no overall narrator, and there really isn't an agenda to it. The film doesn't force-feed you a likable Clinton. The film's real purpose is to show you what happens during these campaigns. Even though it's centered around Clinton, this film really could've been about anyone. The film doesn't sugarcoat anything as it gives you the raw footage and shows you how both sides can play dirty.[92]

Here we see the effects of direct cinema's stylistics: even just removing the narrator gives the audience member the feeling of a non-biased point of view. Yet Pennebaker did present a point of view in his films, despite his stylistic claims of objectivity, evidenced by his comment on *The War Room*: "People didn't like to think of elections as wars, which of course they are."[93]

Filmmaker and scholar Andy Garrison relates the way that this new style of documentary to the technology that changed it, and how the way the audience perceived the films: "once you had sync material in the field subjects could speak for themselves, easily and without a script. You no longer needed a narrator to explain everything

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[92] Amazon reviewer, http://www.amazon.co.uk/Pennebaker-Hegedus-Carville-George Stephanopoulos /dp/ B00004CTSF [website] accessed 5-4-11.
[93] Ibid.

[closing the perceived distance between subject and viewer]."[94] Thus the methods of these filmmakers (as outlined more specifically by Leacock above) created a visual grammar, wherein its stylistic features became associated with a candid look at who was being filmed, seen today in reality tv and the like.

With such comments, direct cinema comes full circle and returns to the very specific history of documentary filmmaking in the US, as scholars know it. In respect to the ideological poles of documentary filmmaking associated with Flaherty and Grierson, D.A. Pennebaker's work also exemplifies the problem with this the binary. On one hand he continued in the vein of Robert Flaherty, by cultivating a continuing subgenre of documentary – the rockumentary, or music/concert documentaries that feature behind the scenes access to musicians (including *Monterey Pop* [1968]; *Ziggy Stardust and the Spiders from Mars* [1973]; and *Jimi Plays Monterey* [1986], among others). These films are entertainment driven films that do not foreground the social and political instrumentality claimed by Grierson for documentary films.[95] On the other hand, he is not naive, having worked on political documentaries like *Town Bloody Hall* (1979) and *The War Room* (1994), the latter of which was nominated for an Oscar, and which is known for its influence on how political campaigns were run. During an interview Pennebaker compared the subjects of musicians and politicians, remarking, "They're not

[94] Andy Garrison, personal communication, 8/2/2010 9:37PM.

[95] In fact a production company I work for, recently worked with an aging Pennebaker to direct a concert video for The National that was aimed to recreate Don't Look Back. Yes this is unfortunately true.

too different. They both have a career based on a talent that they happen to possess, and how they came to decide to exercise it, you don't know."[96]

As seen in Pennebaker's ability to grant his audience access to musicians backstage and political backrooms, these newly mobile filmmakers of direct cinema had indeed extended the previous limitations of their genre's boundaries because they increasingly examined the kinds of private and marginalized subjects that documentary films would have previously consigned to private spheres and generally overlooked - and which would also have been largely inaccessible due to the spatial limitations of the older cameras and sound recording devices. Their shift in technology created an effect of intimacy for the audience who were getting closer looks at new subjects, which was positioned within the traditional truth claims of documentary, buttressed by the filmmakers' ardent self-identification as "observers." As such, the subjects shown as belonging to these newly publicized private spaces began to overlap with the era's identity politics and rising social and political unrest, wherein new representations of otherwise marginalized publics and counter publics emerged. These documentaries thus had begun to claim a new kind of political agency for the filmmaker, one which publicized the politics of a situation through the "objective" capturing of images from everyday life and which was able to show the effects of large-scale political policies through images drawn from the lives of individuals.[97] This was an objectivity quite

[96] http://www.electricsheepmagazine.co.uk/features/2008/12/01/interview-with-da-pennebaker-and-chris-hegedus/
[97] Chanan, "The Politics," 166-7.

different from the contemporaneous news documentary on television because it did not rest on an overt or authoritarian voice guaranteeing its truth.

The direct cinema filmmakers may have had claims to being objective observers, but they also saw this "objective" process of filmmaking as part of the medium's instrumentality, more accurately assuming that the "truth" of the subject would emerge for the audience through their own observations, as active viewers of the footage and images they provided. This newer generation of documentarian thus took over and exacerbated traditional documentary's claims for objectivity of representation, while paradoxically acknowledging that their films would have political impact -- like *cinéma vérité*, direct cinema's goal was a political intervention, wherein subjects were viewed as being empowered to tell their own stories. Their camera became an instrument of truth, working much as Grierson had in claiming an explicitly political, didactic, or educational purpose in his work. The difference between these two perspectives lays in the degree to which they acknowledged the power of the filmmaker in setting a point of view into the material.

The direct cinema filmmakers also believed that documentaries were historical and potentially political texts that could alter the public sphere through their illuminations of truth. Where Grierson believed the affective dimension of documentary films was most effective for relaying stories about the truth of politics, adherents of direct cinema assumed that truth was illuminated by virtue of the observations recorded by the camera. Thus we see how the persuasive voice of the filmmaker is acknowledged within this tradition of understanding documentary films, while at the same time being made

clandestine in direct cinema theorists who assume that positioning the camera conveys he truth, not necessarily the filmmakers. They moved beyond activist traditions like Grierson's, were made from clear positions of advocacy, to espouse an openly political dimension to their representations of truth. *Cinéma vérité* and direct cinema were, however, not the only 1960s adaptations of these earlier historical understandings of the documentary

The Feminist Voice and "The Other" in Documentary

In the late 1960s, another shift took place that aligned documentary with the social and political climate of the era and reclaimed for it its earlier, more explicit associations with political instrumentality: the bourgeoning movement of second wave feminist filmmakers.[98] Important feminist films of this era include, *Harlan County* (Kopple, 1976), and *Union Maids* (Julia Reichert Jim Klein, 1976), among others. This feminist documentary film movement was created with an explicitly political take on the genre's instrumentality in the pubic sphere, based in a practical application of feminist theory, applied to their aims of challenging the patriarchy through documenting female/feminist subjects. While these first feminist filmmakers arrived on the heels of the direct cinema movement (considering the ethical relationships between filmmaker and subjects), they nonetheless diverged aesthetically by framing their subjects within a pathos that focused on the personal- a very feminist lens on the issue that was also embodied in their practices and styles of their filmmaking.

[98] For more on the origins of the feminist documentary please see among others, Diane Waldman and Janet Walker, *Visible Evidence: Feminism and Documentary,* University of Minnesota Press (March 1999).

Perhaps the most exemplary, as well as best known feminist film of the era, is the highly acclaimed *Harlan County* (1976), by Barbara Kopple, which focused on the unionizing efforts in a small Appalachian mining town and took an explicit political stance in both the production techniques and stylistic choices of the filmmakers. Kopple and her team lived in the community they were filming, taking temporary residence there one month prior to filming,[99] a proof of her feminist approach to the relationship between subject and filmmaker, as it fundamentally strayed from the conventions of direct cinema's "non biased" observation.

For Kopple, the relationship between filmmaker and subject could not be strictly observational: the feminist position of the time was that the personal is political. Thus she did not want herself and her crew to be seen as outsiders. By taking residence in Harlan County they established close personal relationships with the subjects of the film.[100] That established rapport allowed for very powerful personal portraits that embodied the practice of the filmmakers in the aesthetics of the film as well. For example the filmmaker used more close-ups than was ever seen in standard direct cinema conventions, commonly relying on the zoom in during emotional scenes to focus on the personal. In documentary film, this stylistic marker allowed a greater attachment between viewer and subject as greater detail is revealed in regards to the pathos of the subject. Importantly from an ideological view, the film also adhered to the second-wave feminist goal of transforming the patriarchal canon, here in the representation of the

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[99] *The Making of Harlan County USA*, DVD extra on, *Harlan County USA* Criterion Collection edition, DVD, directed by Barbara Kopple (New York, NY: Janus Films, 1976).
[100] Ibid.

coalminers union by positioning the struggles of the miners' wives as central to the story (in their unionizing efforts as well as how the struggles between labor and business affected domestic life) – a novel approach to the long history of union films that focused on the male union workers.[101]

Like Kopple, feminist filmmakers distinguished their work from the direct cinema films of the era in the aesthetics of their feminist documentary films. In the words of documentary film theorist Paula Rabinowtz, the feminist film movement was marked by "the establishment of a realist aesthetic based on direct cinema techniques – to authenticate women's lives on screen, which could be seen in the use of female talking heads, hand-held cameras, and multiple protagonists that let women speak their lives"[102] In fact, the aesthetics of this first modern phase of the feminist documentary (through the 1980s) are most commonly thought of by critics today as relying too heavily on "the talking head," because the films relied primarily on first-person interviews which feminists liked because subjects were empowered to tell their own stories.[103]

These feminists sought the inherently political use of first person interviews as testimony rather than as an authoritarian source of information. To similar effect, feminist films of this generation (documentary or not) are also known for an additional stylistic choice: using female narrators (in voice-overs or as hosts) to embolden women's voices and stories in opposition to patriarchal historical narratives and the

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[101] Ibid.
[102] Paula Rabinowitz, *They Must be Represented, The Politics of Documentary,* London: Verso, 1994, 161.
[103] See, among others, Barry Keith Grant, Truth or Dare and Ethical Considerations, online article http://www.filmreference.com/encyclopedia/Criticism-Ideology/Documentary-TRUTH-OR-DARE-THEORETICAL-AND-ETHICAL-CONSIDERATIONS.html, accessed 9-1-11.

institutionalization of the authoritative male news-voice in the genre.[104] Thus, much like the instrumental aims of Grierson, feminist filmmakers saw the medium as a highly affective tool against patriarchy, one that explicitly showed the feminist axiom, "the personal is political."

While the feminist documentary politics stressed instrumentality in their political commitment, unlike Grierson, such feminist documentarians were not under the illusion that they were simply uncovering or communication a found truth. Rather, their approaches to documentary film production showed an explicit understanding that their work was instrumental in mediating and *producing* that truth. Thus the feminist film movement also employed radical film techniques that harkened back to the avant-garde roots of narrative film genres. In that tradition, the films used experimental forms, codes, and conventions that were understood as oppositional to hegemony and disruptive of the everyday perceptions that perpetuated those dominant ideologies.

Even more significantly for the alignment of documentary film as a rhetorical intervention into the public sphere, these films were often screened in community centers, art houses, campus organizations, and union halls, which fostered community building and film-based feminist consciousness-raising events among other political events/actions.[105] Rabinowitz explains:

> Films like *Janie's Janie* and *Rape* became organizing tools teaching women how to set up consciousness-raising groups, women's health clinics, rape crisis centers,

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[104] See, among others, Judith Mayne, Female Narration, Women's Cinema: Helke Sander's the All-Round Reduced Personality/Redupers, *New German Critique,* No. 24/25, Special Double Issue on New German Cinema (Autumn, 1981 - Winter, 1982), pp. 155-171.

[105] Diane Waldman and Janet Walker, *Visible Evidence: Feminism and Documentary* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999).

> an so on. These films, along with historical films like, *With Babies and Banners* and *Union Maids* challenged the absence of black and white working-class women's voices and lives from American (film) history as they constructed a form of solidarity, a feminist 'we,' amid their audiences.[106]

Through this work, filmmaking and film distribution collectives also began to emerge, notably Newsreel, which later became California Newsreel and Newsreel Films. In this way, such filmmakers were aware that their work was not just to report on overlooked truths, for example, but rather utilized documentary films as instrumental speech acts, which would garner political engagement in the public sphere.

The influence of feminist documentary films is important, as its version of instrumentality repositioned the filmmaker as an active participant in the crafting the documentary narrative, and returned production to a feminist post-Griersonian model, by its larger and explicit aims towards consciousness raising and social change. In addition, it opened public spaces for new individual and collective voices, previously shrouded from public view by the ideologies about race and gender at the time. This is not surprising, given that the feminist movement was the vanguard of identity-politics-based social movements in the United States (with the second wave of US feminism shortly followed by the parallel liberation based politics of the Black Panthers, Chicano movement, Gay and Lesbian Movement, among others).

Their slogan that the "personal is political" was echoed in their approaches to documentary film, as it included women previously marginalized from public memory. This generation of activist documentarians established community centers that taught and

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[106] Rabinowitz, *They Must be Represented,* 161.

funded documentary film production. As a result, by the late 1970s, other minority films began to spring up, such as *Scorpio Rising* (1964), *Portrait of Jason* (1967), and *Word is Out* (1977), also expanding the canon of filmic representation for other marginalized publics, who formed similar programs of community based documentary film production and screenings.

The 1980s and Beyond: The Self-Reflexive Documentary

We have seen how the instrumentality of the feminist documentary relied on activist and oppositional techniques of representation to publicize the personal as political. What emerged in the 1980s from this activist groundwork has commonly been referred to as self-reflexive documentary, due to its positioning of the filmmaker within the documentary's narrative, and was also marked by the emergence of digital video cameras.[107] This new era of documentary filmmaking began to write history through a self-reflexive lens that utilized a combination of previous documentary styles from *direct cinema* to the personalized narrative strategies of filmmakers engaged in identity politics. Importantly the self-reflexive documentaries emerged at a time when production equipment was becoming increasingly more light-weight and financially accessible to a larger and more diverse demographic of prosumers – that is, consumers turned filmmakers. The unifying feature of these self-reflexive films is that they acknowledge, and sometimes problematize, the filmmakers' role in documentary production, through

[107] For more information of this era please see, among others, Michael Chanan, The Politics of Documentary, "After Vérité," chapter 14, 234-256, and Bill Nichols, *The Voice of Documentary*, in *New Challenges for Documentary*, ed. Alan Rosenthal (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988), 49.

the visual and/or aural presence of the filmmaker(s) in the frame and narrative structure. Thus instrumentality in this area operated through the aesthetics of reflexivity, to interpolate an array of stories into the public sphere with the self-awareness of the voice of the filmmaker as part of the story.

Like the era of *direct cinema*, again we see how technological innovations engendered a shift in filmmaking for documentarians, one that created a more diverse group of filmmakers than seen historically (through an increase in accessibility with the arrival of video), and a greater demand for documentary films – albeit with new means of distribution.[108] Digital video quickly proved to be much less expensive than film, as cameras of the mid- to late-1980s became even lighter than the previous cameras of cinema.[109] Aesthetically, the image quality of video was greatly reduced from that of film, a shift which generated much debate about the aesthetics and pathos (audience appeal) of film versus video in the media. Histories of this era of documentary filmmaking also point to the emergence of the World Wide Web and YouTube, among other online venues for user-generated content that need not pay extraordinary attention to aesthetics to be effective. Importantly, this generation's documentary production is also marked by a heavier reliance on post production to illustrate the story, including dropins such as animations and other digital effects.[110]

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[108] See among others, Ellis and McLane, "A New History."
[109] See among others, Ellis and McLane, "English-Language in the 1980s – Video Arrives," Chapter 17, 258-292.
[110] Ibid., 260.

Concurrent with these technical changes was an expanding market, in the form of an array of cable channels, which needed to fill airtime with increasingly cheaper programming. On the one hand, this situation favored the proliferation of documentaries: "Documentaries were more widely distributed than ever before . . . There were countless numbers of hours to fill on these new channels but very little money to pay for product to fill them."[111] Thus these changes in technology and filmmaking converged with those in the broader television markets to create more avenues for previously privatized histories and voices to become public – both in television and online.

The most influential film in the dawning of this self-reflexive era was Michael Moore's *Roger & Me* (1989), which presented a narrative about de-industrialization in the small rust-belt city of Flint, Michigan. *Roger & Me* entwined a personal and familial story with a larger structural critique of corporate America's shift towards international trade and labor - or the dawn of its current version of globalization. Moore begins the film with an autobiographical monologue establishing his familial relationship to the GM automobile plant in Flint. It includes a montage of family photos of his relatives who worked at the GM plant, and examines the various social problems that manifested from the closing of that GM plant. The narrative arc of the film is the story of Moore trying to gain an interview with the president of GM to discuss these issues, while revealing the ways the local economy and community has been affected by the closing of the plant. Moore not only inserted himself into the story of the film as narrator, but also aesthetically, as on screen talent, transparently revealing himself and his crew throughout

[111] Ibid.

the course of the film. This kind of transparency around the filmmaker was thus also used to heighten the impact of his political aims, much like the feminist filmmakers use of the personal as political.

Yet unlike the feminists, Moore's innovation to documentary film was his use of humor and irony as part of his instrumentality – and more accurately his success in commercializing that technique. Ellis and McLane comment on the use of the personal as well as his use of humor:

> This narrative device allowed Moore to show the economic hardships and very real personal pain of ordinary people who suffered from the loss of tens of thousand s of blue-collar jobs. It also allowed Moore to create situations in which his chief targets – big business, callous rich people, ignorant bureaucrats – could look genuinely foolish in front of the camera. . . . *Roger & Me* also gave new meaning to self-reflexivity in the cinema, turning it from introspection to broad comedy.[112]

Thus self-reflexivity became a new tool to realize the instrumentality of Moore's work, illuminating his discussion of labor through self-referencing irony that lightens the heaviness of the subject and appeals to a larger audience than the serious tenor of previous documentary films on labor issues. The effectiveness of this strategy was evidenced in the fact that at the time of the film's theatrical release, it was "the most commercially successful documentary ever made."[113]

Despite its box office success, Moore was critiqued regarding the film's truth claims. Richard Bernstein of the *New York Times* reported in 1990:

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[112] Ibid., 320.

[113] Barry Keith Grant and Jeannette Sloniowski, *Documenting the Documentary* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1998), 19.

> Harlan Jacobson, writing in *Film Comment* magazine, and Pauline Kael, in *The New Yorker* - have complained that Mr. Moore's film, although funny, is factually inaccurate. The filmmaker, they say, is guilty of manipulating the sequences of events and compressing them for the sake of emotional and political impact. "Roger and Me," in their view, is thus biased and misleading.[114]

These are the issues that plagued Flaherty, yet unlike Flaherty, Moore was not being accused of staging events, but rather of manipulating the truth of the political issues he addressed -- an accusation that again underscores the agency of the filmmaker in new ways. Bernstein contextualized Moore's film in its transparency and use of humor as attempting to appeal to the masses, comparing it to Jonathan Swift's *Modest Proposal*, where the author proposed the solution to the Irish Famine was for the Irish people to feast on their own children.[115] Interestingly Bernstein spoke with Richard Wiseman, one of fathers of direct cinema, who said:

> I readily acknowledge that my films are biased, subjective, prejudiced, condensed, compressed," the experienced and well-regarded documentary filmmaker said in a telephone interview. Indeed, he said, all documentaries are necessarily distortions of reality, since, obviously, they are filmed through a lens and edited. Events that might have taken place over weeks, months or years are reduced to a presentation of, at most, a few hours.

Thus Moore, in Wiseman's reading, was not being less truthful than a practitioner of observational cinema, just more transparent. Bernstein on the other hand illuminates Moore's use of humor as critical to his political instrumentality and innovation, concluding that that Moore has redefined the genre as we know it.[116]

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[114] Richard Bernstein, 'Roger and Me': Documentary? Satire? Or Both?, New York Times, February 1, 1990.
[115] Ibid.
[116] Ibid.

Moore's film is exemplary of self-reflexive instrumentality in this era of documentary films, and a divergence from the observational documentary style of direct cinema in its approach and aesthetics. Bill Nichols describes this new generation of documentary's conventions as follows:

> These new self-reflexive documentaries mix observational passages with interviews, the voice-over of the filmmaker with intertitles, making patently clear what has been implicit all along: documentaries always were forms of representation, never clear windows into "reality"; the filmmaker was always a participant-witness and an active fabricator of meaning, a producer of cinematic discourse rather than a neural or all knowing reporter of the way things truly are.[117]

This style thus revolutionized the genre by liberating it from the necessity of appearing unbiased and granting the form greater liberties to use narrative strategies for its filmmaking practice. This can also be seen in the work of filmmakers like Nick Broomfield (*Soldier Girls* [1981], *Chicken Ranch* [1983], *Fetishes* [1996]) and Morgan Spurlock (*Supersize Me* [2004], *What Would Jesus Buy* [2007], *The Other F Word* [2004], among others).

Thus the newest generations of documentary's truth claims have mutated their discussions into claims of authenticity, in which instrumentality is redefined as providing representations that are to be evaluated by the public. The role of the filmmakers in the production is to be questioned, rather than assuming the truth lies in the archive alone, or the original source of the represented images. Thus the self-reflexive filmmaker is working in a new era of accountability, although the public does not necessarily take into

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[117] Bill Nichols, *The Voice of Documentary*, in *New Challenges for Documentary*, ed. Alan Rosenthal (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988), 49.

account just how complex the techniques of the genre work towards crafting the persuasive argument of the film.

Some Conclusions: The Life and Truth of Documentary Film

As we saw in the case of *The War*, the result of this shift in pubic thought is that such inquiries into a filmmakers' work now reveal how documentaries are increasingly being positioned by their makers within a more interactive space of reciprocity between audience and filmmaker, where public memory and public(s) are being contested and produced, in community spaces, online forums, and more directly through political agitation (like DTH) and films that are produced in response to or as a dialogue with other films.

With such epistemological and rapidly changing technological advancements, the borders between documentary and narrative films as well as professional and non-professional filmmaker have in many ways converged, and the history of documentary film has yet to catch up.[118] Certainly the rapidly changing technological advancements that have led us to 2012 cannot be limited within this era of filmmaking that began with Michael Moore. We now have YouTube, and Video, and expanding set of tools that literally allows anyone to make films. In fact YouTube recently publicized its ambitious

[118] Apple's consumer release of Final Cut Pro, for example, truly allows anyone with a personal computer to use professional grade editing equipment, which previously required the expensive purchase of a separate system, like Avid. More recently, consumer and prosumer cameras have continued to drop in price, while raising standards of image quality due to the emergence of digital video and then HD, or high definition technology. What this means is that more and more amateur documentaries are being released, to higher standards of quality (although still low quality in comparison to large productions, however the story and subjects of documentary have always been privileged over the films use of aesthetics).

new content strategy, which is pouring funds and resources into created proper online television channels for niche markets.[119] HD is our new workflow, with 4k on the horizon, and the internet is our new theater but these developments are ostensibly too nascent to be properly placed in the history of documentary in the public sphere.

Filmmakers like Moore have begun to use this space, but they have not necessarily begun to theorize what this space might imply for more than their own positions as producers of documentary truth. At best, the feminist filmmakers and Moore show how the agency of documentary subjects can be added to the filmmaking process In this chapter, we have seen how this shift has been accomplished in several stages in the history of documentary film, from Grierson, to *direct cinema*, and into the self-reflexivity of feminist filmmakers and more recent documentarians like Michael Moore.

Each of these moves is accompanied by changes in technical restrictions, making different claims for truth, politics, style, and the films' position within the public sphere. Where documentary film had previously been carefully split off from fiction film by two generations of filmmakers, newer technologies are again aligning the production process of documentary filmmaking more closely with fiction filmmaking (particularly as the current aesthetic in fiction filmmaking commonly adopts the aesthetics of documentary filmmaking, most popularized through TV programs like the US adaptation of *The Office*).

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[119] Please see among others, Brian Stelter and Claire Cain Miller, "YouTube Plans to Make Big Bet on New Online Channels," *New York Times*, October 28, 2011.

The understanding of documentaries by its practitioners has thus steadily evolved. But the genre has also recently become professionalized and self-conscious through the bourgeoning of documentary studies programs, just as more voices from the general public have been enabled to become their own documentarians. Buttressed by YouTube, Itunes, video, online video sites like Hulu, and the DIY celebrity culture (reality TV, YouTube celebrities, etc.), current video culture encourages anyone to pick up a camera and shoot. And importantly, the new documentary relies on user-generated content and found footage in a way that older documentaries did not, and it also has begun to account for feedback that is too nascent in its development to be historicized.

Against this background, it is straightforward to see that the issues taken up by Defend the Honor in regard to Burns' *The War* were not new, but rather part of the longer discussion on representation, style, and public memory in documentary film. Overall, however, the history of documentary filmmaking has been told as I have approached it here: chiefly as a question of the goals of a filmmaker (various instrumentalities, some aesthetic and some political) and how those goals may be achieved through manipulating the public perception of truth claims through various versions of its aesthetics.

Clearly, this history raises a considerable number of questions that have not necessarily been approached by the filmmakers, no matter how they have set the groundplan into existence for how documentaries are to be discussed. The production and consumption of documentaries still is understood largely in terms set by Grierson's generation, asking what kinds of truth the documentary can claim and what kinds of truth effects it might have on its readers. Thus Michael Moore continues to be challenged on

the veracity of truth claims in his films, despite his approach where he makes his own voice in shaping the film's transparency in different ways, including a meta-dialogue.

Analysts of documentaries do not take up the question of what happens to a documentary when it becomes part of a cluster of related utterances. For instance: in response to his book, *Stupid White Men,* David Hardy and Jason Clarke published *Michael Moore is a Big Fat Stupid White Man*, which spent six weeks on the *New York Times* best sellers list.[120] In addition, a proliferation of documentaries were made to challenge the truth claims of Moore's films, including *FarenHYPE 9/11* (Lee Troxler, 2004)*, Celsius 41.11* (Kevin Knoblock, 2004), and *Michael and Me* (Larry Elder*,* 2005), which we will address in greater detail in chapter 3. That is, practitioners still often see their documentaries in surprisingly narrow terms, which need to expand to include new technology and approaches to filmmaking as an event and a public discussion of the sort that Moore has learned to initiate. It also needs to account for this kind of rapid fire "clustering" of films that talk to each other and the public sphere, and especially for the difference of media technologies that affect audience perceptions of what kinds of truth such documentaries actually offer.

Finally, the history of documentary film has shown how filmmakers have paid attention to questions of truth and reference, expressed in its attention to *whose* truth might be represented, and how changes in the medium have altered access to producing that truth. These issues clearly resonate strongly in a case like DTH and Ken Burns' *War*,

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120 Michael Moore, *Stupid White Men: ...And Other Sorry Excuses for the State of the Nation!* Regan Books, 2004; David Hardy and Jason Clarke, *Michael Moore Is a Big Fat Stupid White Man* (New York: Harpe/Collins/William Morrow Paperbacks 2005).

given that the whole premise of the case was the question about whose truth -- whose history -- was going to be included. Yet as we shall now turn to, documentary film theory has not necessarily moved beyond these historically important issues to reclaim a whole other set of issues about documentary film as a commodity, as part of an ideological field in several dimensions (not only reifying or challenging the hegemony), or as public memory and identity politics.

The history of documentaries still remains to a great degree the history of major documentarians' self-fashioned theories of documentaries, tying their goals as filmmakers to particular aesthetic and technical markers. The examples traced here do not exhaust the full range of proposals made by documentarians to explain their work, but they are major points of reference for a great number of such discussions. And prevailing academic discussions of documentaries have followed these discourses to set up accounts of the main issues in the field, as we will pursue in the next chapter of the present discussion.

CHAPTER 2:

From History to Theory:
Re-Approaching the Documentary Film

As suggested in the previous chapter of this project, the ground plan for theoretical discussions of the documentary were early set by practitioner documentarians who were trying to legitimize their work and /or to situate it within particular contexts, such as television or 1960s-style activism. As they did so, these documentarians also excluded many genres that arguably could have been included in studies of the documentary, such as propaganda films. The academic study of documentary film has only begun to itself transcend this bias in the last two decades, in no small part because the genre was originally studied within the general curriculum of the film schools that had been institutionalized several decades earlier, in the 1960s and 70s. That position has led to a kind of institutional blindness, as well. Many scholars of documentary film and the histories of the genre they produce still reflect the assumption that there was a complete deficit of theory on documentary film prior to the 1970s, when in fact this is not the case, as I have already suggested in the last chapter.

The goal of the present chapter is to fill out the presentation of documentary theory, taking up theorists working next to or outside the practical contexts in which so much of that pre-1970s theory originated as part of documentary's historical evolution. In surveying this body of theory, I will again highlight the questions of instrumentality, representation, truth claims, and aesthetics that have run through discussions of the genre all the way through the DTH movement and Burns' *The War* situation. In so doing, I will reclaim a body of theory that extends the paradigm for studying documentary beyond the role and intent of the documentarian, and into optics that are more illuminating for situations like *The War* and for the current generation of documentary film turned site for public discussion.

The Origins of Documentary Theory in Film Production

As we have seen, early documentarians were the genre's early theorists, mostly in relation to intellectual communities of filmmakers working in different public contexts. However, these early theorist-filmmakers left more interviews than they did scholarly or systematic essays, although many were prolific in their writing of essays and books. The seminal documentarians John Grierson and Paul Rotha did leave a substantial amount of written work, enough to warrant being considered as the first generation of documentary film theorists.

While Grierson, as we have seen, wrote more from the practical side of the craft, Rotha appeared to be more successful in writing for a more formally educated audience. Both authors framed their theories about documentaries in terms very like those I have outlined above, taking a purist approach to the instrumentality of documentary film, with

Grierson emphasizing the genre's ability to transform the public sphere through political documentary texts, as we have seen. Rotha's comments open up a new discussion, as he reflects most saliently on the genre's truth value, on the specific techniques and aesthetic considerations that represent the greatest "actuality" of the pro-filmic action in more theoretical terms.[121] The work of these two documentarians has continued to influence more academic arguments about the genre.

As seen in the last chapter, Grierson's theory was put immediately into practice in his British documentary film project, which combined documentary theory with practice to conceive the form as educational. In coining the term "documentary" (from the Latin verb *docere,* to teach or point out, and *documentum* - lesson or instruction; warning), he situated his own project in the shifting cultural and political landscape between WWI and WWII, which saw a change in communication and growth of mass media. Filmmaker and film theorist Michael Chanan underscores the systematicity of this program when he writes:

> Grierson conceived his documentary project against the background of rising Fascism, as a means to help strengthen the democratic system through civic education. In short, he maintained that the weakness of the system could be addressed by using the mass media in the interests of education for citizenship, and that documentary, which he proceeded to define accordingly, was an ideal tool for the job.[122]

In positing an ongoing debate between art and science for documentary, Chanan takes up the historical argument that Grierson "disassociated documentary from 'art,' and

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[121] Please see, John Grierson, *On Documentary* (Berkley: University of California Press,1966) and Paul Rotha, *Documentary Film* (New York: Hastings House, 1935), among others.
[122] Chanan, "The Politics of Documentary," 133.

substituted a discourse of 'public service' and 'public education,'"[123] and makes it the ground for further theoretical discussion.

Chanan's work exemplifies how Grierson's practical plan was transformed into an important theoretical move about the ontology of the documentary film, redefining its nature as a genre fundamentally different from narrative cinema, whose purpose was a craft of entertaining the masses was seen as an escape from the "real" issues of documentary. That binary between art and education between documentary and narrative film remains fundamental in documentary discourse.

However, what today's theorists often assume is not necessarily a reflection of what such a terminological distinction was originally meant to designate. In the context of cinematic practice, the question of that dichotomy between art and education was not that clear cut, a doubt replicated in contemporaneous discussions of subgenres of documentary as well. It is worthwhile here to see how Grierson himself explains the situation:

> Documentary was from the beginning – when we first separated our public purpose theories from those of Flaherty – an "anti-aesthetic movement." We have all, I suppose, sacrificed some personal capacity in "art" and the pleasant vanity that goes with it. What confuses the history is that we always had the good sense to use the aesthetics. We did so because we liked them and because we needed them. It was, paradoxically, with the first-rate aesthetic help of people like Flaherty and Cavalvanti -our "fellow" travelers' so to speak – that we mastered the techniques necessary for our quite unaesthetic purpose.[124]

Grierson's remark explains that, while history remembers documentary as an "anti-aesthetic" movement, aesthetics were in fact very important to this craft. Yet Grierson was *not* attempting to theorize all documentaries at all times, but simply to set himself off from some competition. He made his statements simply to underscore that aesthetics

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[123] Ibid., 137.
[124] Paul Rotha, *Documentary Diary* (London: Martin Secker & Warburg, 1973), 273.

themselves were utilitarian, to be used in the service of his larger humanitarian aims -- instrumentally, rather than with reference to artistic qualities in and of themselves. His distinction was made to promulgate his vision of documentary in service of social activism, but he never denied that his films needed to pay attention to the aesthetic conventions of the medium, if they were to have their intended impact.

Such distinctions rarely have emerged in the work of more recent critics, given the comparatively new status of documentary film study as an academic discipline requiring more precise theoretical concepts than the kind of first-order approximations that Grierson offered. Thus more recent critics like Chanan, when commenting on Grierson's innovation, are remiss in conveying the impression that Grierson *replaced* the aesthetic discourse of fictional films with an instrumental one. That kind of claim is understandable in an era where many scholars still focus on film form and aesthetics -- by making it, they imply that documentary films do not fit the models they work on. Unfortunately, this common but restricted reading of Grierson's dichotomy remains central to much documentary theory today, as it perpetuates Grierson's strategic difference elevated to the status of *the* principle of documentary filmmaking and its aesthetic and narrative conventions.

Let us thus return for a moment to Grierson and see what he actually was insisting on in a quotation like that above. His point was to subordinate aesthetic discourse to "public service," and to make sure that the films spoke to their public rather than simply reflecting the tastes and goals for makers. This point is critical to the kind of argument needed to understand a case like DTH and *The War* as *both* a question of aesthetics and an act of public consciousness-raising.

The status of Grierson's corpus may actually point out an important thing about documentary film theory: from the first, in work like Grierson's, that theory was never confined to essays or structured utterances, but was to be derived *both* from his actual film *and* his recorded statements. Today's scholars do make associations beyond those for which he accounts, such as when they connect documentarianism to the scientific status of the camera, originally conceived of as an instrument of scientific inquiry, with the photograph placed in service of the news and government as "evidence." In Grierson's era, the documentary was often marginalized, and cut off from other categories of film in terms of the place of its presentation (e.g. in schools rather than in theaters) and its insistence on "truth" rather than aesthetic expression and its capacity to elevate the human spirit. The force of this "truth" *as reference to a common world of experience shared by filmmaker and viewer* (rather than the ability of a fictional film to move or transform through aesthetics) is tacitly what Grierson relies on as he stresses the ability of a documentary film to educate. The post-structuralist theories of culture and power that emerged since the 1960s would thus read Grierson's education somewhat differently that many academic critics have: such constructed binaries are most often fallacious linguistic oppositions that maintain hegemonic systems of power.

In this context it is again useful to return to Grierson's generation to recapture a fuller picture of the theories embodied in the films made by these early, practically oriented "theorist" of the documentary genres.

Grierson's reputation as the father of British documentary film was owed more to his role in shaping the avenues for documentary production and its design, as he actually wrote relatively little on the subject, it fell to his work partner Paul Rotha to offer

extensive commentary on documentary, in a prolific collection of essays published throughout his life. Despite his penchant for writing, however, Rotha's life work also remain thoroughly intertwined with practice, as in the "Greirsonian tradition" that used documentary instrumentally, in the cause of social service.

Rotha's written work often alluded to the issues of truth and power that interest culture theorists today, as he considered the problem of the "actuality" of representation, as conditioning the filmmaker's choices, stylistic or otherwise. These discussions provide a broad foundation for later theoretical discussions of documentary's truth claims. Like Grierson's, Rotha's legacy has been somewhat displaced by today's critics. His major published book *Documentary Film* (1935, out of print) focuses on film theory and criticism, but most especially on the technique of documentary filmmaking and its representations. Yet while his most significant work was written in the 1930s, that theoretical *œuvre* went largely unheeded, until it was republished just before the millennium, in the *Paul Rotha Reader*,[125] in a selection that does not necessarily capture the amplitude of his entire project. That now standard anthology used today includes his analyses of film culture and industry in Britain as well as recommendations for the best practices by film editors, a selection that obscures the breadth of his theoretical vision.

In one sense, Rotha continues the conversation on the instrumentality of documentary film and its delineation from entertainment based narratives. He writes,

> Let cinema explore outside the limits of what we are told constitutes entertainment. Let cinema attempt the dramatization of the living scene and the living theme, springing from the living present instead of from the synthetic fabrication of the studio. Let cinema attempt film interpretations of modern problem problems and events, of things as they really are today, and by so doing

[125] Paul Rotha, in collaboration with Sinclair Road and Richard Griffith, *Documentary Film* (London: Faber and Faber Limited, 1935); Duncan Petrie and Robert Kruger, *A Paul Rotha Reader* (Devon: Exeter Press, 1999).

> perform a definite function. Let cinema recognize the existence of real men and women, real thins and real issues, and by so doing offer to State, Industry, Commerce, to pubic and private organizations of all kinds, a method of communication and propaganda to project not just personal opinions but for a world of common interest.[126]

Here we again see the stereotyped separation between entertainment driven narratives and those made for the benefit of the public sphere. In such statements, Grierson's instrumentality resonates in Rotha's writing.

Yet Rotha also outlines some fundamental theoretical points about the aesthetics of documentary filmmaking, asserting most prominently that documentary style must be appropriate to its subject. He writes:

> In documentary, a slum must be a slum, with all its hideous filth and willful ugliness. In the story-picture, a slum is photographed in a charming, sentimental manner so as to fulfill the romantic aim of the amusement cinema.[127]

Thus Rotha points out that documentary, like the "amusement cinema," must make conscious links between styles of representation and its chosen goals for the filmmaking. He debunks the amusement cinema's use of photography in the sentimental manner not because it is aesthetic, but because it is *romantic* --- it represents reality as an as-if or an if-only, rather than as part of a current reality. In this Rotha reflects Grerison's understanding of utilitarian aesthetics that documentaries must use to effect social good, and in a staunchly conservative fashion. Yet here again, he acknowledges that *all* filmmaking has the aesthetics of choice in representation.

These readings of Grierson and Rotha suggest that documentary filmmaking was *from the first* described (if not "theorized" in the modern sense) as incorporating both aesthetic and instrumental claims. The difference that these founders of the genre saw

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[126] Rotha, "Documentary Film," 70.
[127] Ibid., 153.

between their work and fictional cinema (amusement cinema, narrative cinema, story-cinema) could best be described as a different ethos claimed for the relation of filmmaker and audience: the documentary was designed from the first as a form of persuasive expression, yet with the instrumental purpose of helping the audience see the world differently by confronting them with well-chosen representations of what was to be critiqued. In contrast, early art cinemas claimed their transformative power in their use of aesthetic, new images, believing that new images created by genius filmmakers would change their audience. The difference of focus between these two points of view, therefore, was less instrumentality (both wanted to change their audiences), but rather a question of reference: what was the *goal* of the transformation to be, changing the social world, or an individual mind -- almost a class distinction, aligning the documentary not only with socialism and potentially even propaganda, but with class position rather than with bourgeois norms of taste and expression.

This point helps us to problematize the next generation of documentary theory that began to emerge after the 1960's *cinéma vérité* and direct cinema movements, which were primarily concerned with the best uses of this new form of documentary as a kind of critical positivism, offering audiences a kind of "observational" method that supposedly allowed the audience to find the "truth" these films conveyed. In this generation again, the practitioners of documentary were writing on the subject (like Leacock, among others mentioned in chapter 1), while writings on film theory proper (in the modern sense) were still scarce.

Nonetheless, Louis Marcorelles' seminal work, *Living Cinema: New Direction in Contemporary Film-Making* (1970), has emerged as the most comprehensive scholarly

statement about the era's approach to documentary filmmaking.[128] The significance of *Living Cinema* as a position paper about documentary cannot be underestimated, especially when one considers that documentary production itself had begun to migrate to television and to a comparatively limited palette of aesthetic choices. The position of documentary film thus might have been considered tenuous, especially when film theory and production departments began to emerge in academia during the mid to late 1960s. To a great extent, these programs (many growing out of English departments) took narrative films as their subject(s), thus creating a particular bias that informed the few theorists writing on documentary film in the academy as opposed to behind the camera. Thus *Living Cinema* must be highlighted as probably the first major (if not the very first) scholarly text to address documentary as a specific genre. What is also interesting is that he, too, uses a strategic dichotomy to situate his work: he positions his work in opposition to the scholarly criticisms of the era's most popular film theorist, Christian Metz, in order to set the documentary among (but in opposition to) the new forms of experimental cinema that Metz discussed.[129]

Marcorelles attempted to establish direct cinema as a new medium, claiming the genre and its new technologies as a revolution in cinema, which, in its relation to documentary impulses, is instrumental in its potential to capture the truth of filmic representation of profilmic acts. Much like Grierson and Rotha, Marcorelles also situates the documentary film in terms of its instrumental force in relation to its audience (rather than to the filmmaker or the potential of the medium alone), but more in the interest of humanism than of politics. He argues that direct cinema allows for "a deeper, intense

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[128] Louis Marcorelles, *Living Cinema, New Directions in Contemporary Filmmaking* (New York: Praeger Publishers, Inc., 1970).
[129] Ibid., 14, among others.

understanding of things as they really are."[130] He continues "the force of direct cinema lies, quite simply, in the fact that it can testify to, and can catch the intensity of, a moment in history."[131] Thus he does not claim its purpose as public service, beyond its promise to capture reality in the most "natural" way, but does agree with their focus on seeing reality through representation. In framing his subject this way, Marcorelles reifies the truth claims of the documentary film much as direct cinema filmmakers had, stressing the observational context of the medium.

Importantly for the case of documentary, as well, was his questioning of the role of "filmmaker as observer" in direct cinema, an assumption which ultimately reified the era's notions that there was greater authenticity in the new documentary practices and aesthetics than in older documentary forms (and than the new documentary). He describes the style of Richard Leacock in terms that show his emphases clearly:

> It shows things familiarly, does not prettify things, the camera enters every day life and removes the myths from it, or if it does show a myth, it extracts all it can from it, and leaves the audience to draw its own conclusions.[132]

This statement underscores the author's belief in the camera's observational role, while also revealing that he essentially disregards the cameraperson's subjective capturing of the event as it happens. This is also indicative in his attention to the arrival of synch sound, which allowed audiences to see the original sound captured with the footage (without the mediation of an editor to synch the two with magstripe film), thus separating it from narrative films where sound is dubbed in. One effect of this technological background was the privileging of the spoken word in crafting a documentary storyline, arguing that, "the visual detail that cannot be treated separately from the sound that

[130] 32.
[131] Ibid., 108.
[132] Ibid., 50.

accompanies it."[133] Marcorelles thus positions the filmmaker as "observer" and identifies best practices with the new technology, but he also shied away from the explicit political and social instrumentality of aesthetics and the genre or the educational motivation that both Grierson and Rotha acknowledged -- a move that makes his theories more dogmatic in an era of dogmatic *auteur* discussions of narrative film, and more aligned with the production end of documentary filmmaking rather than its social purpose.

Despite this theoretical lacuna, Marcorelles' approach represents dominant approaches in documentary theory into the 1970s and 1980s, as the preliminary study of documentary began to be formalized as a specific scholarly area of scholarly interest. Yet they often moved beyond his impulses into overtly political analyses. Overall, much of this generation of theory followed the arguments for power and identity politics that emerged in the DTH situation, showing their primary concern with the power relations and ethos of documentary film production as entangled with the truth claims made by scholars like Marcorelles: with the social contracts made and implied between subject and documentarian, treatment of the narrative, and the like. Scholars thus quickly moved beyond Marcorelles to read documentaries as *texts*, aimed at highlighting assumptions that its truths were natural, for instance by showing point of view. In addition key films in the genre's historical canon began to be read and reread through these new theoretical lenses to understand the gendered and racialized codes therein and to deconstruct truth claims too often asserted for the form.

Most notably, the 1970s saw a substantial contribution of female (and particularly feminist) scholars interrogating documentary filmic representations of women, most

[133] Ibid.

notably Patricia Erens and Vivian C. Sobchack,[134]who were among the feminist scholars of the era.[135] Just as feminist documentarians appropriated the genre, feminist scholars also began appropriating narrative film theory (French feminist post-structuralist and psychoanalytic theory) for documentary film analysis. [136] Like their "sisters in practice," this generation of theorists questioned hegemonic codes in a phallocentric economy, to see how women have been constructed through filmic representation.

Vivian Sobchack takes this politics of analysis to offer a radical feminist critique of the work of Marcorelles' generation of filmmakers and theorists, in *No Lies: Direct Cinema as Rape* (1977), by arguing that "the often aggressive and exploitative methods of direct cinema" is a kind of rape.[137] Patricia Erens exemplifies feminist principles of filmmaking in *Women's Documentary: The Personal is Political* (1988), arguing that almost all feminist documentaries have enriched the field by bringing to documentary a new sensitivity, by asking the unasked questions, and by training their camera on previously invisible subjects."[138] These representative feminist film theorists addressed issues of best feminist practices for filmmakers, in terms of the treatment of the subject in the narrative, as well as considerations of the inherent power dynamics between

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[134] Ibid.

[135] Jack C. Ellis and Betsey A. McLane, *A New History of Documentary Film*, 334. The 1970s also saw the inception of women's studies in academia and increasingly more accessible means of film production, which combined, allowed feminist theorists and scholars the institutional support and resources to publish and produce films. Finally, the 1970s and 1980s saw the rise of the feminist art movement, which included feminist filmmakers, like Barbara Hammer among others, who used the medium for experimental feminist films, which helped introduced the skill sets of filmmaking to the community.

[136] Important to these works was the theoretical work Laura Mulvey, "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema," *Screen* 16, Autumn (1975). Laura Mulvey dramatically changed the terms of the discussion with this seminal work, which questioned the patriarchal gaze of the camera in general and argued that standard film conventions worked to objectify and fetishize women. While she did not address the documentary directly, her skepticism about inherent biases in representation reflected a shift in conceptualizing documentary's "realism," which formed the basis for feminist scholarship on documentary.

[137] Vivian Sobchack "No Lies: Direct Cinema as Rape," *Journal of the University Film Association* 29, Fall (1977): 18.

[138] Patricia Erens, "Women's Documentary: The Personal is Political," in *New Challenges for Documentary*, ed. Alan Rosenthal (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988), 565.

filmmaker and subject, thereby realigning the documentary in theory with its explicitly political uses as theorized by Greirson and Rotha.

Feminist documentary filmmakers and scholars continued writing into the early 1980s, an era which saw a significant increase of documentary film scholarship, most of which dealt mainly with challenging the truth claims of documentary film and the ethics of filmmakers vis-à-vis their subjects, as best seen in the anthology *New Challenges for Documentary* (1988), edited by Alan Rosenthal.[139] *New Challenges for Documentary* is a thoughtful collection of scholarship on documentary film from the 1980s, representing the issues under discussion at that time and the then-current state of documentary theory. He explains that

> what is being attempted, in essence, is a close textual analysis of documentary in an attempt to strip the form of myths that have accumulated over the years – for example, that documentary is 'truer' than the standard fiction entertainment film.[140]

As presented here, the decade was dominated by theoretical questions about objectivity, attempts to define documentary (how do you define the form if it is no longer based on a conceptual divide between fiction and nonfiction?), and discussions about filmmaker ethics and best practices.

Oddly, this generation of film theory still was interested in the documentary as filmic art and as representation from the production point of view, but largely lacked are discussions of aesthetics in documentary beyond point of view, and thus they also underplayed the educational and persuasive roles assigned to the documentary. Part of this scholarly situation was generational: post-structuralism had taught virtually all the

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[139] Alan Rosenthal, ed., *New Challenges for Documentary* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988).
[140] Ibid., 12.

humanities and arts to question hegemonic power, as Rosenthal's anthology amply attests. Yet among these analyses of power relations were few, if any, attempts to understand the semiotics of a specific filmic text, film language, and the ways in which they constructed subjects. Feminist documentary film theorists in particular did continue to challenge the positionality of subjects and filmmakers within the hegemony, notably E. Ann Kaplan and Vivian Sobchack, who I cited above, but they were essentially focusing on the location and type of relations between film and audience, not on their mechanics -- not on rhetorical devices inherent in documentary films. They problematizied the ethics of relations between subject and filmmakers, while only beginning to historicize the genre and tackle in new ways questions of what constituted documentary.

Contemporary Documentary Theory

After the1990s, a new wave of documentary theory took a clear concerted and interdisciplinary interest in historicizing and contextualizing the genre within contemporary epistemologies that would necessarily call its objectivity into question and thus would in effect reclaim the analyses of filmmakers back at least to Grierson. Importantly, we are finally seeing theoretical literature where scholars are “talking back” to older theories – a clear indication that a new more comprehensive approach to theorizing the documentary as part of film studies has arrived.

The contemporary documentary film theorists who emerged during this time, most notably Brian Winston, Michael Renov, and Bill Nichols, all began publishing scholarship on the subject in the 1980s, but their optic did not emerge full-blown until the

1990s.[141] This group is as much concerned with a theoretical style deconstructing the form as they are with performance theory and the social/political uses of the genre, as best evidenced by the work of Stella Bruzzi, among others.

Renov, Nichols, and Winston are all contributors to Michael Renov's seminal collection of documentary film scholarship *Theorizing Documentary* (1993), a landmark anthology which begins with the editor's comment that academic interest has only recently reemerged in the area of documentary film.[142] Michael Renov is most concerned with bringing documentary theory into the center of film scholarship, and thus he argues against the genre's truth value. Instead, he argues that concepts from narrative film theory must be used to understand the discursive effects of documentary representations on the audience, thus recovering some of documentary's claims to aesthetic meanings.

Renov is one of the very first scholars who can reframe the intent of documentary as rhetorical. He claims to be equally concerned with resituating documentary beyond the "observational," and to "more fully articulate a sense of documentaries discursive field and function, aesthetic as well as expository."[143] He does so by arguing four tendencies of documentary, its attempts

1. To record, reveal, or preserve
2. To persuade or promote
3. To analyze or interrogate
4. To express.

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[141] Jane M Gaines, "Introduction: The Real Returns," in *Collecting Visible Evidence,* eds. Jane M Gaines and Michael Renov (Minnesota: University of Minnesota, 1999), ix.
[142] Michael Renov, *Theorizing Documentary* (New York: Routledge, 1993).
[143] Ibid., 13.

Unfortunately, his analysis was quickly discarded by most scholars in favor of Bill Nichols' "modes of documentary," discussed below.[144] Nonetheless, several decades later, Renov published another approach to the genre in *The Subject of Documentary* (2004), which focused on more recent autobiographical modes of documentary film and how they construct identity.[145]

What is critical for the present project is that Renov's work overall has broadened the definition of documentary used in film theory, especially since he include new technologies (YouTube and inexpensive cameras, among others), which enable different forms of what he would call performance than do traditional forms of documentary film-making, such as auto-biographical filmmaking or "documentary essays." His work thus goes far in establishing as a *cluster* of related genres at the core of what all too often has been considered a limited historically limited set of documentary filmmaking styles. Yet as I will argue in the final section of this chapter, he still focuses on the production side of documentarianism rather than on the kind of common rhetorical space that early theorists identified as the ground for education through documentary.

Also from the same intellectual generation, Bill Nichols is particularly known for his essay, "The Voice of the Documentary," later expanded into the book, *Representing Reality* (1998), which presents a widely cited typology of "Documentary Modes" that has become the standard theoretical discussion of how documentary works.[146] In that discussion, Nichols breaks down four modes of documentary film that lie at the base of historically attested documentary genres, offering a taxonomy based on the reflexivity of

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[144] Ibid., 21.
[145] Michael Renov, *The Subject of Documentary* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2004).
[146] Nichols, *Representing Reality* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1991).

the filmmakers and how visible that reflexivity is to the audience in the structure of documentary film.

According to Nichols, the first mode, expository documentary (including, for example, Grierson and Flaherty, among others), "addresses the viewer directly, with titles or voices that advance an argument about the historical world," as stylistically seen in the film's preference for a "voice of god" narration.[147] The second mode, the observational mode (including Pennebaker and Wiseman), refers its ideology to cinéma vérité and direct cinema techniques that frame subjects through purportedly "unobtrusive" filmmaking practices, which positioned the camera documentarian as "observational." Interactive documentary (e.g., de Antonio and Connie Field), the third mode, engages documentary subjects directly through interviews and "interventionist tactics, allowing the filmmaker to participate more actively in present events."[148] In this mode, archival footage and interviews replace re-enactments and "voice of god" commentary. The style here places an emphasis on visual evidence through testimony and archive materials. Finally, the fourth mode, reflexive documentary (known from the work of Jill Godmillow and Raul Ruiz, among others) "arose from the desire to make the conventions of representation themselves more apparent and to challenge the impression of reality which the other three modes normally conveyed unproblematicly."[149] This mode purportedly shows the filmmakers problematizing the text itself through meta-commentary, as it reveals its own "strategy, structure, conventions, expectations, and effects."[150]

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[147] Ibid., 34.
[148] Ibid.
[149] Ibid., 45.
[150] Ibid., 57.

Most significant for the present argument is that Nichols' taxonomy rests on his claim that the various modes position the *filmmakers* differently for the audience in terms of how visible their role is as authors of their subject(s) -- a start on defining genre as a rhetorically structured engagement. Nichols' model also claims the existence of sub-genres of documentary, as he theorizes the ethos of and the conventions of representation inherent in each documentary mode -- thus tying documentary ideologies to cinematic aesthetic conventions and other forms of performativity. Nichols' model remains the most revisited and celebrated of models for understanding documentary filmmaking that we have today. Interestingly, it is not generally known, in the general scholarly preference for Nichols, that Rotha had early formed a preliminary categorization of documentary types (which he calls "documentary traditions," that have yet to picked up by scholars in relationship to Nichols' taxonomy.[151]

Other voices emerging after the turn of the millennium do promise to update Nichols, albeit in ways other than I will in the following section. Let me note each briefly.

Brian Winston's writings were featured in both Rosenthal and Renov's anthologies, but their number and significance picked up substantially in the late 1990s and 2000s with his publications, *Lies, Damn Lies, and Documentaries,* and *Claiming the Real.*[152] His work is now primarily concerned with the form of documentary in relation to *cinéma vérité* and its truth claims, and with the ethical considerations between filmmaker and subject. The former is a discussion of the documentary ethos -- its appeal

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[151] Paul Rotha, "Documentary Film," 75-101.

[152] Brian Winston, *Lies, Damn Lies, and Documentaries* (London: British Film Institute, 2000); Brian Winston, *Claiming the Real, Documentary: Grierson and Beyond* (London: British Film Institute, 1995).

to truth -- with regard to controversies at the time to docudramas, whereas the latter focuses on the history of documentary and to the relevant ethical discussions therein.

Another important, and less referenced, theorist from this era is Dai Vaughan, who began working as a film editor in 1963, but who was also a prolific writer throughout his film career, offering work that was not often recognized in the academy until the publication of *For Documentary* in 1999.[153] *For Documentary* is an essay collection discussing major threads of documentary film theory – its historical forms, aesthetics, technology, and truth claims. Vaughan's work is primarily focused on documentaries on television, but offers valuable insight into key debates of the time. Most importantly, Dai Vaughn conceptualizes the aesthetics of documentary as imperative to its instrumentality.

With the proliferation of "queer theory" in the 1990s, feminist documentary film theorists have continued to problematize gender construction and the performativity of the subject, as best exemplified by the work of Susan Scheibler, among others.[154] Although not an explicitly feminist text, Stella Bruzzi's much acclaimed *New Documentary: A Critical Introduction* relies heavily on ideas of performativity (à la Judith Butler) in her analysis of documentary films.[155] In that text, she argues that documentary films are anything but objective representations, but must rather be seen as products of "the intrusion of the filmmakers into the situation being filmed; that they are performative because they acknowledge the construction and artificiality of even the non-fiction film and propose, as the underpinning truth, the truth that emerges though the

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[153] Dai Vaughn, *For Documentary* (Berkley: University of California Press, 1999).
[154] Ibid., 108-135.
[155] Stella Bruzzi, *New Documentary: A Critical Introduction* (London: Routledge, 2000).

encounter between filmmakers, subjects and spectators."[156] Her feminist impulses are echoed by the work of other feminist theoreticians of documentary film, including particularly Paula Rabinowitz, who is well known for her work in the field, particularly her book, *They Must Be Represented: The Politics of Documentary*, a representative text for the era which offers a gendered history of documentary film, broken down by the periods where social activism led to the emergence of new filmic representations of marginalized (previously private) communities (by race, class, gender, sexuality, etc).[157] She thus points to political documentaries as rhetorical in nature, arguing that their work creates change in the political and cultural spheres, yet again with the filmmakers in control of that politics.

None of these theorists, however, have ever managed to recapture the particular setting of theory that reach back to Grierson, combining issues of documentary production with a nuanced discussion of audience, and positing that the education that can take place by means of the documentary actually happens because the films are rhetorically tailored *to that audience*, rather than to the particular cause, and that the films necessarily respond to the needs of that audience in the moment of their conception -- and, as the case of Burns' *War* documentary, as summarized above, even able to intervene in that conception in an age of accelerated media networks.

The current generation of theorists recover the importance of the identity politics involved in that case --- the depth of the problem of how Latino veterans were not represented or labeled -- but not necessary to understand the second round of protests about how those materials were eventually included in the documentary as a claim to

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[156] Ibid., 8.
[157] Paula Rabinowitz, *They Must Be Represented, The Politics of Documentary* (London: Verso, 1994).

agency and co-creation, not just as a phenomenon of reception. To accommodate such analyses will require, as I will argue in the next section, to draw on a different range of sources to recover a new sense of documentary as producing not just truth and representation, but also a particular kind of interactive public space or "town hall," which fosters public speech acts in the kinds of clusters of documentary films and public(s) that emerged from the contestation around *The War's* final edit.

Re-Approaching the Documentary: The Gaps in the Existing Literature

As I have just outlined, documentary film theory in academia has constituted itself as speaking to a very distinct set of issues and debates resting on readings of early documentarians' writings, and organized around strategic oppositions such as instrumentality versus aesthetics, neutral observation versus education, and truth/fictionality of representation, as they try to classify what is now recognized as a cluster of different subgenres functioning under the general rubric of documentary. Documentary historians Jack Ellis and Betsy McLane argue the prevailing discussion is on "practice and ethics."[158] However, what is missing from these analyses is any substantial expansion on Grierson's original descriptions of documentary, as I read them above.

That is, the documentary has not necessarily been treated as a rhetorical act, implicating several different kinds of agency in its production, and so we lack the tools for analyzing ideology and power in relation to rhetoric – here, in the rhetoric of the

[158] Ellis and McLane, "A New History," 334.

medium (its aesthetic resources), the image (its "truths" or representation), and its subjects (the question of "who speaks" in producing and controlling not just representation, but the space of documentary itself). All too often, even in the "best practices" theory paradigm in which critics like Michael Chanan work, documentary film is still seen in terms of instrumentality alone, as a made object designed to intervene in the consciousness of a viewer by means of its construction (and thus through the agency of an author-authority-filmmaker).

What is absent from these discussions is a more thorough examination of the audience's role in relation to the aesthetics and pleasure in documentary film, particularly in the context of new technologies and media. Ellis and McLane note that

> Audiences have been conditioned for several generations now to accept certain aesthetic qualities as part of documentary. They are unlikely to reject a nonfiction film simply because it has less-than-perfect image quality, sound or editing techniques.[159]

To be sure, documentary filmmakers and theorists have addressed the question of aesthetics since the dawn of documentary itself, however it continues to be subordinated to the cameras scientific role in the public sphere. This reiterates the importance of an analysis of aesthetics, that is often forgotten in scholarship, but moreover shows that documentary film is still considered in terms of its purported stance of authenticity and objectivity and in relation to its ability to use or challenge hegemonic truths; it is not necessarily considered as being interactive or as an unusual *event* of public speech, as was the case in the *War* documentary. The documentary has be theorized as political in the public sphere, but without substantial input from the public.

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[159] Ibid., 329.

To show the implications of this suggested re-framing of the documentary will require me to link issues of aesthetics and instrumentality in documentary film theory with new sets of tools of theoretical models, particularly, I believe, with the existing tools of rhetoricians which show us how to better understand how the genre and its texts function in the public sphere.

Trying in this way to bridge the divide between rhetoricians, documentary film theorists and filmmakers, and especially to theorize modes of instrumentality in the newer generation of documentaries, will require me to draw on new resources, particularly because existing literature on documentary films from rhetoric and communication studies is limited, consisting largely of narrative film analysis, or deep textual readings of documentary films to understand their instrumentality for political change in the public sphere.

This kind of scholarship is solidly exemplified by Angela Aguayo's 2005 dissertation, *Documentary Film/Video and Social Change: A Rhetorical Investigation of Dissent*, which questions the instrumentality of documentary film for social justice.[160] Aguayo's work takes up the debate between new and old social movements to question the legitimacy of the mass media –here documentary - to create sustained social change, arguing that the genre does in fact have the potential to do so. Yet arguing what kind of instrumentality is at play in a particular genre or set of genres is not enough, because that kind of an analysis does not specify the rhetorical moves and thus the conversation in which a particular documentary engages. To trace that engagement reveals, in turn, how a documentary can create a public space, wherein a new set of interactive dynamics for

[160] Angela Aguayo, "Documentary Film/Video and Social Change: A Rhetorical Investigation of Dissent," (PhD Dissertation, The University of Texas at Austin, 2005).

public consciousness-raising arise between documentary texts, publics, and discourses. Aguayo traces a context needing ideological correction through a documentary intervention where I want to pursue the course of the actual persuasive power of the documentary as it structures particular kinds of public interactions, both directly and indirectly.

I am not alone in pointing out this option. Carl Plantinga's *Rhetoric and Representation in Nonfiction Film* (2007) is one of the few key texts about documentary films in rhetoric, one which interestingly was out of print until its re-issue in 2010.[161] Plantinga starts conventionally by addressing the myth of objectivity in documentary film towards understanding its modes of truth-telling. Yet then he looks at the larger stylistic devices in documentary as well as content to argue documentary as a rhetorical text, which make an argument about the films representation, which can be categorized by "voice."

Much like Nichols' taxonomy, Platinga then also distinguishes three different kinds of voice in documentary film, "The Formal or Formative Voice," which is instructional and seen in more traditional forms of documentary that use the voice of god; "The Open Voice," which is more indicative of the self-reflexive documentaries that ask the audience to explore the issues therein and "the Poetic Voice," for the more abstract and "artistic" forms of documentary. What is particularly interesting about Platinga's argument for the present project is his theorization of the limitations of categorizing documentary, claiming, "it is most fruitful to think of nonfiction not in terms of unchanging or universal intrinsic properties, but as a socially constructed category that is

[161] Carl Plantinga, *Rhetoric and Representation in Nonfiction Film* (Cambridge University Press, 2007).

fluid and malleable; it changes with history."[162] Nonetheless, while Platinga presents the best work on documentary in the field from a rhetorical perspective, he continually reverts back to comparisons between films and texts, using theories of semiotics and linguists, which is limited as explained by Michael Chanan.[163]

The Rhetoric of the New Political Documentary, edited by Thomas W. Benson and Brian Snee, goes further in establishing an entry point for rhetoricians to begin a more in-depth examination of documentary film.[164] They focus on the political documentaries that came out around the 2004 elections, arguing that these films were legitimized by television broadcasts and their runs at the theater, all of which positioned the films as texts with multiple and important forms of agency in the public sphere, given newly reconceived relations of a genre to news, history, and commentary -- all links enforced by the speed of the electronic media. Specifically, they argue that these films constitute a subgenre of documentary, as the new political documentary project, by virtue of their close temporal proximity to the 2004 election as well as the immediate and interactive response between the filmic texts and the public which the authors conceived as a the potential instrumentality of documentary film to foster change in the political sphere. Unfortunately, these authors do not generalize their analyses of new interactive patters past their cluster of 2004 election films, not even taking up parallel claims for such power made by the newer generations of self-reflexive documentary films.

In addition, this seminal volume still shows clear signs of an inherited scholarly ignorance about how documentaries work as film and within and in relation to various

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[162] Ibid., 37.
[163] Chanan, "The Politics of Documentary," 48.
[164] Thomas W Benson and Brian Snee, *The Rhetoric of the New Political Documentary* (Carbondale,IL: Southern Illinois University Press, 2008).

media and forms of public mediation, particularly in regards to how the stylistic choices in documentary film production function to create rhetorical or persuasive communications in plural ways. Benson and Snee do posit that that the new documentary is marked by the use of video, small budgets, and techniques outside the "observational" realm of *cinéma vérité*, clearly not an original claim. Yet overall, this anthology lacks the technical expertise in the cinematic medium that would make their initial stylistic breakdowns more compelling. For instance, they do not discuss issues like how the domain of the cinematographer includes rhetorical tools for crafting the story – how a subject is framed and how that frame is lit, for example, may easily be said to function persuasively.

That is to say, what is missing is a thorough investigation of how the grammar of cinematography itself constitutes a rhetoric, and how that rhetoric might actually condition the reception of the documentary message. Finally, one of the authors above, Thomas W. Benson appears to have been a champion of combining a study of rhetoric with film, beginning in the 1980s, but his previous work is limited to several articles about Frederick Wiseman, preceding the technological changes that began in the 1990s.[165] In addition, it lack the technical insight into production that allow for a more fuller analysis of how those techniques can be manipulated as rhetorical moves in a film's final cut, especially in a world of interactivity, ancillary materials supplementing the film (often in the form of interactive websites) and even homemade media reactions to the original. In this framing, the documentary becomes a multi-model event, during which

[165] See among others, Thomas Benson, "The Rhetorical Structure of Frederick Wiseman's High School," *Communication Monographs* 47 (1980): 233-61,

an audience educates itself into political transformation as much as it is educated by the well-formed documentary message as represented in a film text.

Remember that, in my introduction, I set out the following guidelines for analyzing documentary films, derived from a conversation between Jameson and Chanan. An analysis of the documentary as an event must account for:

1. The subject of the documentary in its site-specific context (location/time/social-political-historical-cultural context)
2. The subject of the documentary in relationship to the filmmaker (in regards to identity politics as well as how the power dynamics there and between subject/filmmaker are handled)
3. The cinematography as rhetoric (and in relation to various historical moments and conventions in documentary film production)
4. How the story is put together, from the perspective of post production
5. How the story is packaged, bought and sold (marketing and distribution)
6. The public response to each film as feedback, locating self-reflexive public(s) and discourses in public space, print, TV, and online, and interaction between public and filmmakers – between the films themselves.

These multiple frameworks of analysis, I believe, constitute the archive of data documenting the rhetorical space in which a documentary film interacts with the audience and in which not only the audience, but also the film itself, changes meaning (or sometimes, as in the case of *The War*, even its own form). This is the analysis heuristic that I will use in my case studies in the two chapters that follow the present discussion.

For the present, however, it is useful to expand each of these tenets to see what kinds of positionality, agency, and performance each implies. .

1. THE SUBJECT OF THE DOCUMENTARY IN ITS SITE-SPECIFIC CONTEXT.

Both history and literature studies have taught us the importance of placing a text in its temporal, social, and historical context, for documentary films it is important to place each film in the site-specific location of both its production and release. This includes the social and political climate surrounding the film, relevant to its subject and discourse. For example, in order to understand the case of Ken Burns War, it was important to note the historical lapse of memory in regards to the subject of Latino veterans in documentary's public memory. It was also important to understand the changing technologies that allowed the kind of online organizing that spawned the Defend their honor movement. Critical to that discussion was also the growing Latino population in the US, and the greater political importance being placed on that demographic in American politics – particularly as the funder/distributor of the film is PBS, which gets both private and public funding entities. A thorough inquiry would place the film inside this historical and social context, as well as the context of documentary history and conventions, to better understand how it shaped the story being told.

2. THE SUBJECT OF THE DOCUMENTARY IN RELATIONSHIP TO THE FILMMAKER

Critical cultural studies, working with strategies familiar from the practical and theoretical work of feminists, among others, most frequently has interrogated the identity politics of the filmmaker, especially as a move for self-authorization.

For example, Ken Burns' position as an iconic documentary filmmaker gives his voice in *The War* an increased validity and authority through the institutionalization of his films on and distributed by PBS. An analysis should thus explicitly ask how his subject position and identity politics – his white male privilege – might enable or otherwise influence his mediation of the story of marginalized publics? What, for example, actually was what was his relationship to his Chicano subjects? Did he establish a report? Was he there for the interviews? How did he and crew interact with the interviews and how did that effect what information was captured on film/video? How was he perceived going into minority communities, trying to tell their story?

3. THE CINEMATOGRAPHY AS RHETORIC

We have seen that cinematography -- the aesthetic toolbox of filmmaking -- has long been acknowledged as carrying its own meaning as a visual rhetoric, and how it has come to be associated with various generations of documentary films' truth claims and discourses of ideology. These are important issues to address with each documentary film, especially how they are using their era of technology to tell the stories of their subject.

For example, in Leni Riefenstahl's film *Triumph of the Will*, she often placed her camera at a low angle to get "the hero shot," which creates a feeling of grandeur, ascribing a visual rhetoric of epic greatness to the subject being filmed.

Such choices, as we have seen, lead us to question whether the camera in a certain film acknowledges its own role in the story or feigns an "unbiased eye"? Does it zoom frequently? Does it follow the conventions of news style reporting? Does it use handheld

and shaky or take on more of a narrative form of storytelling with smooth movements? What does this tell us about the intentions of the filmmaker in regards to truth telling?

4. HOW THE STORY IS PUT TOGETHER, FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF THE POST PRODUCTION

What happens on set or in the field during production would be fruitless without the editor to craft the story in post production -- all documentary or narrative films must have some sort of story arc. The editor must sift through the footage – acquired in production as well as in the form of archive footage and still photography (which might be treated by the Ken Burns effect)– and work with the director and sometimes writers to create the documentaries narrative and story arc.

In the example of *The War*, an editor, and not the filmmaker himself, was responsible for deciding how to insert the added materials in the final edit. The editor could have chosen to weave the new material on Latino veterans into the existing edit of the film, but instead chose to add the material in a special section – an issue that was publicly criticized for its continued marginalization of Latino veterans. This is not necessarily a fluke: the editor of any piece virtually always not only determines the structure and content of the films narrative, but also its pacing, and visual contents - what shots are chosen, who and what is being shown in the frame. It will be important to not only note the choices made in the edit for each case study, but also to accommodate for other facets of post production such as animations, text and titles, as well as the soundtrack. Editing creates the particular public engagement that will arise around a documentary film.

5. HOW THE STORY IS PACKAGED, BOUGHT AND SOLD (MARKETING AND DISTRIBUTION)

The path of a documentary's marketing and distribution is critical to understanding documentary texts as a public interaction, as well. This includes who funded the film, purchased the film for distribution, which can determine whose interests were being upheld in crafting the films narrative. This was seen in the case of *The War*, where changes were made after picture lock due to public pressure on PBS and CBC, as we have seen. The framing of the film poster for *The War*, and later for Flahterty's, *Nanook of the North*, cue the public to an interpretive stance, suggesting how the film's message was being packaged, through visual imagery and text in order to garner public interest in the film. The posters, among other marketing tools, like film trailers, will be important for each of our case studies, revealing how the films message is being interpolated into public discourse. Our analysis will also pay particular attention to questions of how the film is being marketed for either television or theatrical release, to give better context for the filmmakers' use of cinematic conventions.

We will also be looking at online packaging though websites, telephone "aps," and any supplementary materials either that are included in the DVD or can be purchased separately, such as books and/or memorabilia -- unspoken creators of public interactions

6. THE PUBLIC RESPONSE TO EACH FILM, PARTICULARLY AS A FEEDBACK LOOP

To understand the pedagogical intent of a film involves not only looks at interviews with filmmakers but also responses from the audience. In this era of new technology, this landscape of interactivity creates new public spaces. For example, there may be live feeds of commentary on websites and/or other community based message

boards that show an interactive response to the film and its marketing -- or tweet streams or blogs providing real-time commentary to viewers. As with the case of *The War* we will be particularly interested in such multiple forms of exchange between the filmmakers and the public, and even in regards to films speaking to each other.

These frameworks of analysis, I believe, isolate and help interpret the various forms of interactions that constitute the public space on which the film and its audiences interact in many different strategies. I am not alone in pointing out that a broader set of tools is now proving itself necessary to interpret the kinds of intervention currently experienced in an encounter with the documentary. Carl Plantinga states in his *Rhetoric and Representation in Nonfiction Film* (2007), that

> Theorists have often been quick to making sweeping pronouncements about issues such as objectivity, reflexivity, and ideological effects of formal documentary. But theory alone cannot fully answer all the questions we want to ask. It must often be applied to particular films in relation to their idiosyncratic requirements. In other words, theoretical generalization need the tempering of specific circumstance. A theory of nonfiction film is more useful in relation to the study of particulars in any case is impossible. To the extent that it is possible, however, theory not only can illuminate the issues surrounding particular cases, but the particular cases in turn improves and corrects the theory.[166]

It is precisely this point where the multiple frames of interaction between film/filmmaker and public comes to life as heuristic tool for analyzing documentary.

The New Public Space of Documentary

The public space in which the documentary functions, as Grierson knew long ago, is not an abstract public sphere, the way the Frankfurt School would begin thinking of it, but rather a network of relations that individual join to exert their own agency in either

[166] Platinga, "Rhetoric and Representation," 191.

accepting or rejecting yet another cultural text. In the early twenty-first century, the documentary has entered into this kind of public network, under parallel conditions.

I will return to the question of this documentary space as a rhetorical space in the conclusion to this project. For now, let me reiterate which multi-disciplinary sources help to ground my analyses.

Michael Chanan's *The Politics of Documentary* will not only be essential to my analysis for the abovementioned model but it is also is critical in considering a new approach to theorizing the *time and space* of documentary. However, Chanan generally stops with deciding if a documentary affirms or refutes its space. Instead, I believe it can be argued as *producing* a new kind of speech community, one that spans time and space in unheard-of ways. And here, theories of communication can help us to clarify what is at stake in an event of public documentary communication, as exemplified by the case of *The War.*

In addition to Chanan for historical background I will again use Barnouw's Documentary*, a History of Nonfiction Film* (1993)*,* and *A New History of Documentary Film* by Ellis and McLane (1997), even though both fall short in their analyses of new technology (and not just by virtue of the dates they were published). Nonetheless, they represent comprehensive, often traditional approaches to documentary film that still color our readings today.

For my analysis of reality TV as a new offshoot of the documentary mode, I will refer to the work of Brain Winston in *Claiming the Reel II, Documentary Grierson and Beyond,* and *Lies, Damn Lies, and Documentary*, although the former focuses more on the history of documentary, and the latter on British TV scandals. His work shows

clear new acknowledgments of how power is transferred to create new forms of agency, once a text enters the public sphere

To honor the forefathers of documentary and reclaim their work for the scholarly archive I will use the work of Grierson, Rotha, Leacock, and Drew, particularly as it relates to the practices of the craft itself, and the instrumentality of the form. For a feminist perspective I will use Patricia Erens for her examination of identity politics in troubling the relationship between filmmakers and subject.

Carl Plantinga's *Rhetoric and Representation in Nonfiction Film* (2007) remains the key to a rhetorical analysis of film genres In addition, *The Rhetoric of the New Political Documentary*, edited by Thomas W Benson and Brian Snee, will be particularly important when I analyze Michael Moore's film *Fahrenheit 9/11*, highlighted in the first case study for its representation of scholarship on documentary today.

This project of reading the case studies will also necessarily be informed by theories of publics and counter publics, via Jürgen Habermas' *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere* and Michael Warner's *Publics and Counterpublics.*[167] Habermas' ideas of a unified public sphere have been criticized heavily, but will be helpful in its theorization of critical rational dialogue to foster democracy. In addition its basis for Warner's conception of counterpublics will be useful to understand the way communities are formed around documentary that can galvanize democratic action in the public sphere.

[167] Jürgen Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*, trans. Thomas Burger, with the assistance of Frederick Lawrence (Massachusetts: Institute of Technology, 1989); Michael Warner, *Publics and Counterpublics* (Massachusetts: Zone, 2002).

My goal in combining these perspectives is again to specify what kinds of public speech, identity, politics, and public identity politics are at play to educate *and* satisfy aesthetic concerns in the genre of the document.

THE CASE STUDIES:

My first case study will be Michael Moore's film, *Fahrenheit 9/11* (2004) which garnered the heavy backlash from conservative pundits and critics around the 2004 presidential election. The response to film was widespread in the media, and it garnered a cluster of films in response, as well as countless books and websites. Historically, Michael Moore not only changed the form of documentary with his reflexive blockbuster hit *Roger and Me* in 1989, but continued to regenerate interest in documentary through his feature films that followed, including *Bowling for Columbine* (2002), and *Sicko* (2007), among others. We will look at how Moore's film was instrumental in the public sphere through its ability to foster new publics and discourses that took on interactive qualities, beyond the persuasive political message it is most often theorized as (as in the case of Benson and Snee).

My second case study will be a popular reality television show broadcast on a major cable network that centers on teenage mothers. I have worked on this show for 18 months and due to my confidentiality agreement can not disclose its name, but I will be able to use my personal experiences and those of my co-workers to reveal insider knowledge on how examine how the show is made through its production methods. The show is not only aired for broadcast but also plays full episodes on the network's website, where a live running commentary and interaction from online users is continuously updated in real time as the show plays. This will give great insight into the relationship

between the show and the audience as being engaged in a shifting network of identity politics. This closer look at reality tv will help us understand the genre as a new popular form of documentary, and ask how it can be historically situated in the televised documentaries of the 1950s and beyond.

Looking at these two case studies, I believe, will also help us understand the differences between documentary designed for television and for theatrical release, and raise questions about the newer modes of viewing documentary through online venues with live feeds of interactive user commentary. It will also help to look at documentaries of the last twenty years to see how their instrumentality, aesthetics, truth claims, and representation function in the public sphere in more plural ways than theorists after Grierson rarely noticed.

In the technologies that have allowed for interactive public(s) to emerge around newer documentary texts, documentary films are instrumental in opening public spaces to facilitate (or block) new relations of public speech, as presented through the aesthetic rhetoric of cinematography in the context of history, culture, and hegemony. As such, as I will return to in this study's conclusion, this theoretical; model represents is a critical and long overdue project for the field of Rhetoric and Language Studies which, like the Griersonian tradition, seeks to better understand and embolden public speech and public life.

CHAPTER 3:

Michael Moore's *Fahrenheit 9/11*

Michael Moore's film *Fahrenheit 9/11* was released on June 24, 2004, less than five months from the November presidential election where democratic candidate John Kerry was running against the republican incumbent George Bush Jr. The timing of the films release and its subject came under tremendous public scrutiny due to its chief arguments that Bush was unjustly elected in 2000, because of the Florida miscount, as well as its critiques of the administration's handling of 9/11 and the war in Iraq. Due to the film's polemics, its initial financial backer, Disney's Miramax, pulled out of releasing and distributing the film after the picture was locked. However, film moguls Harvey and Bob Weinstein ultimately released the film under the company name Fellowship Adventure Group, partnering with IFC and Lionsgate films.[168]

The polemics of *Fahrenheit 9/11* elicited a huge backlash from conservatives and engendered intense media attention, ultimately leading to greater publicity for the film.

[168] Shawn J Parry-Giles and Trevor Parry Giles, "Virtual Realism and the Limits of Commodified Dissent in Fahrenheit 9/11," in *The Rhetoric of the New Political Documentary,* eds. Thomas Benson and Brian J. Snee, (Chicago: Southern Illinois University, 2008), 41.

Its opening weekend gross domestic revenue was $23,920,634 (it ran on 868 screens) - the film ultimately grossed $222,446,320 worldwide, thereby setting new records for documentary film, which normally receives many fewer theatrical runs and garners significantly less profit than narrative films.[169]

Interestingly, the backlash against Moore was also seen in a partisan multi-media response to the film, which included a plethora of books and websites attacking Michael Moore and *Fahrenheit 9/11,* most notably for the present discussion, a cluster of films including, among others, *Farenhype 9/11* (Alan Peterson, 2004), *Celcius 41.14 The Temperature at Which the Brain Begins to Die* (Kevin Knoblock, 2004), and *Michael Moore Hates America* (Michael Wilson, 2004). This cluster of films had explicit didactic goals for how they informed the American public before the 2004 election, as they all worked to pose alternative answers to the questions posed by Moore in *Fahrenheit 9/11*.

The rapid succession of these films highlights a greater instrumental deployment of new documentary in direct political action (traditionally echoed in one sense in the way many documentaries were/are produced by political parties, but now moving beyond that venue, as in this case). Moore's film was actually given so much weight in the public sphere as a political voice needing to be countered that tens of thousands of dollars went into making films that worked to provide dialectical responses. The responses were, importantly, also made possible by the new technologies and practices of documentary filmmaking that allow such rapid production and release of films.

This cluster of films around the 2004 election poses important questions for scholars of documentary, in regards to the growing potential of documentary's instrumentality, wherein the medium itself might well be considered an interactive space

[169] "Fahrenheit 9/11," Internet Movie Database, accessed 1-2-2012, http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0361596.

of deliberation, creating new discourses and publics/counterpublics in American public life. This chapter will take up this theoretical point in arguing how it is critical to move beyond an analysis of the single medium in the newest generations of documentary film to the *event* of the film, beginning with it's release. If the case with which we started this project showed how a documentary and its public interacted, then *Fahrenheit 9/11* signals in many ways a new possibility of creating public discussion -- not in individual voices, but through competing documentaries.

This new phase of documentary studies has already begun, in one sense. Rhetoric scholars Thomas Benson and Brian J. Snee attempt to answer these questions in their highly acclaimed book *The Rhetoric of the New Political Documentary* (2008). There, they argue that the 2004 documentaries that came out before that election marked a new era in political documentaries.

> *Fahrenheit 9/11* and the responses to it marked some of the most distinguishing features of the new political documentary – its ability to be produce and distributed quickly enough to engage other films in partisan, cinematic debate, to create the impression and perhaps the reality of significant effects on public opinion, and to influence the campaign agendas of both major parties.[170]

The above mentioned quote is the most clear and relevant in their case, however much of their argument is often unclear and ambiguous. For example, their analysis of these films' instrumentality-- what they actually aim at achieving -- is also ambiguous, as they claim "it is not known whether the new documentary films of 2004 had a major influence on the results of the election," yet also that "it is clear that the new political documentary shaped the discourse of the campaign"; they incorrectly predicted there would be more such films in the next election."[171]

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[170] Benson and Snee, "The New Political," 2.
[171] Ibid, 19-20.

Another problem with their argument is that they do not clearly delineate between the "new" political documentaries and the old political documentary. For example they argue that the "new" political documentary films of 2004 were, "closely linked to attacking or defending the character of a candidate or engaged in historical expose."[172] At the same time, they analyze these films against previous campaign's focus documentaries such as *Journeys with George* (Alexandra Pelosi and Aaron Lubarsky, 2003), which they call an example of the old documentary, despite the fact that it fits into their categorization of the new political documentary, as seen above, among others.

Perhaps it is the timing of these films, in relationship to the election, and each other, which gives the strongest support to their argument, but the proximity of these films to each other, and how their rhetorics *answer* to each other or try to condition the public's response to them is not adequately stated in filmic terms. Importantly, this phenomena of documentaries speaking to each other in rapid succession is a larger trend in new documentaries, not just campaign based documentaries.[173] It is also possible that the problem with their argument is that which is inherent to categorizing documentaries, often discussed by newer documentary scholars like Stella Bruzzi, among others, as the contents and style used to define those categories too often overlap to fit neatly into categories.[174] Nonetheless, the authors do acknowledge that it is perhaps to early to understand this new era of political films, and I believe that such gaps in their discussion are indicative of the larger epistemological problems in theorizing documentary film today.

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[172] Ibid., 10.
[173] For example, *An Inconvenient Truth* (2006), was followed by BBC's *The Great Global Warming Swindle* (2007), and *Global Warming: The Rising Storm* (2007).
[174] Stella Bruzzi, *New Documentary: A Critical Introduction*, (London: Routledge, 2000).

As we discussed in previous chapters, part of the problem in figuring out models for discussing such films is due to the essentially nascent stage of scholarly attention to documentary (focusing, as much recent work still does, on documenting the documentaries and reclaiming documentation of their production and impact). At the same time, this scholarship on documentaries has often become interdisciplinary and focused on the issues represented therein (analyses of Al Gore's infamous climate documentary, *An Inconvenient Truth* [2006], follow this norm). Yet such analyses largely ignore critical aspects of the history of documentary, its practices, and theories. In addition, given that we are in a historical moment where technology is changing so rapidly, and viewing films is increasingly moving to online venues, it is difficult to theorize what the impact of these changes will ultimately be. Nonetheless, the ability of documentarians to work on "rapid response" mode to a documentary like *Fahrenheit 9/11* suggests that the practitioners are already using this space of documentary not just to *answer* to the politics presented by one film or to shape political discourses, but also to answer to *the audiences* as a much more plural group and to create a much more nuanced field of public discussion than earlier theorists have addressed.

To exemplify these issues this chapter will first examine an essay in Benson and Snee's anthology, *Virtual Realism and the Limits of Commodified Dissent in Fahrenheit 9/11,* by Shawn J. Parry-Giles and Trevor Parry Giles. This essay shows the vanguard of theory in discussing Moore's work as a new kind of political speech. In it, Parry-Giles and Giles argue that Moore's uses of what they describe as conspiracy theories and partisan rhetoric, humor, and virtual-reality, undermine the film's realism and political efficacy in a traditional sense. As we shall see, that discussion shows a lack of

understanding about the structures and theories of documentary film that filmmakers themselves have used and commented on, as we have seen -- their work points to several larger problems in the way scholars are conceptualizing documentary.

The heuristic model set forth in the previous chapter will help illuminate the gaps in the authors' analysis and offer other ways of reading documentary texts by considering its production practices, historical context, marketing, public reception, and the ways it resonates in public life beyond the end of its credit roll, among others. The result will be the first steps in outlining new ways scholars today in which might approach documentary as interactive spaces of representation and political contestation. We begin by looking at the arguments posited by Giles and Giles, illuminating the tenets of documentary film construction and structure which are lacking in their argument, followed by an analysis of the *Fahrenheit 9/11* documentary event that will be guided by rhetorical principles, in order to illuminate larger epistemological problems about theories of documentary.

Virtual Realism and the Limits of Commodified Dissent in *Fahrenheit 9/11*

Shawn J. Parry-Giles and Trevor Parry Giles's article, *Virtual Realism and the Limits of Commodified Dissent in Fahrenheit 9/11,* follows the trend of considering Michael Moore's documentary film as something beyond the pale of the more traditional documentary ethic. It takes great issue with *Fahrenheit 9/11*, arguing that Moore's approach to the filmmaking inhibits its ability to effect any real change in the public sphere. Based on their reading of the film and its production methods, they argue the

limited veracity of *Fahrenheit 9/11's* political discourse: it is marked by what they see as conspiracy theories, partisan politics, as well as Moore's use of humor and virtual reality, which together ultimately make the film a profit driven entertainment narrative.

Giles and Giles, however, make arguments that themselves reveal epistemological gaps in what they consider legitimate documentary activity. Herein I will break their arguments down into separate issues to trace the limits of their vision of what I will call documentary discourse-- the larger set of representations involved in a documentary film seen as an event in the public sphere.

1. Critique of Conspiracy and Partisan Rhetoric

Giles and Giles first argue that Moore's film utilizes conspiracy and partisan rhetorics, exemplified by his discussion of the 2000 election. Their proof for this assertion is found in the sequence in Moore's film that connects the relationships of the Bush family to major institutions involved in deciding the outcome of the election: the commentator who made the initial call for Florida at Fox News, who was Bush's first cousin, the governor of Florida (his brother Jeb), and finally the Supreme Court of the US, whose members were largely Bush Senior appointments. In isolation, these quotations do indeed sound like a conspiracy. Yet they do not contextualize their quotes within the larger sequence it is pulled from, its auditory and visual parts, or its function within the larger narrative of the film -- within a longer arc of logic that seems actually to function quite differently. Their arguments, in fact, emerge as problematic against the background of other structural and historical understandings of documentary film theories.

Giles and Giles draw their inspiration from Shane Miller's definition of the "argumentative role" of conspiracy theories, claiming Moore is portraying "some powerful entity engaged in a grand scheme to control or deceive the massive." They continue:

> these narratives are common in Hollywood films, notes John Nelson, where films expose conspiracy theories that have shadowy bosses who communicate behind the scenes to pull the worlds strings. That Moore opts for such a common Hollywood thematic further underscores the entertainment value of the film – its capacity to function and succeed alongside more typical entertainment fare.[175]

Interestingly, the authors call the film "entertainment" on one hand, and, on the other, "propaganda," two distinctly different kinds of narratives used in film history to describe the rhetorical intentions of particular film. Moreover, they overlook how Moore has set up the whole film, politically. He does not portray Bush as a sinister mastermind, but in fact portrays him as barely competent enough to run a government -- hardly a person capable of orchestrating a grand conspiracy, and much more in line with the establishment of an amusing character as would be done in narrative cinema.

In addition, Giles and Giles conflate partisan political speech with propaganda, as they cite various connections between people associated with the film and the Democrat Party, such as the Weinstein's personal donations to the democratic party, as well as those from Lionsgate Entertainment films, as proof that this was a partisan film.[176] Again, it seems contradictory to accuse Moore of being a conspiracy theorist and a Democrat, as the two are not automatically linked in terms of political discourse. These facts might indeed alienate viewers who accuse Moore of partisanship, but they do not suffice to draw the line between propaganda and political speech.

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[175] Ibid., 39.
[176] Ibid., 41-2.

What's important here is not so much to disprove the arguments of Giles and Giles but rather to show how their argument was flawed as a reading of a documentary film. They ignore larger contexts of arguments, they do not pay attention to the filmmaker's previous work, or earlier responses to the filmmaker's public persona in the media, all of which are missing in their argument.

Moore's body of work has always documented and grown out of his political leanings far left of liberal, which he substantiated in an interview on *Dateline NBC* in June, 2004.[177] His work preceding *Fahrenheit 9/11* includes a litany of books, including *Stupid White Men* (2002), attacking conservative political positions, and films like *Roger & Me* (1989), which challenges the corporate cutbacks of GM in Flint, Michigan, within a larger critique of corporate greed, poverty, and global capitalism. His film *Bowling For Columbine* (2002) takes on the National Rifle Association and other conservative groups who uphold the right to bear arms in the constitution. With such a large canon of work, and for a filmmaker has played such a critical role in revitalizing the genre of documentary in America (recall that *Roger & Me* broke all existing records of box office numbers), it is imperative that any documentary theorist take those previous films into account, as they often speak to each other and/or substantiate the narrative conventions of a filmmaker as evidence of how he constructs political speech in the process of filmmaking.

Remember that Moore has historically been unapologetic about his politics that date back as far as *Roger & Me* and his television series *TV Nation* (1994). His interview on Dateline NBC is revealing of his political goals, where he responds to Matt Laure's questions about the political motivations behind the film:

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[177] Matt Lauer, Dateline NBC, updated 6/18/2004 10:21 PM ET: *Moore Defends Incendiary Film*.

> It definitely has a point of view, that's absolutely correct. But I'm not a member of the Democratic Party. If you know anything about me, anybody who's followed me, I'm the anti-Democrat. I have railed against the Democrats for a long time. They have been a weak-kneed, wimpy party that hasn't stood up to the Republicans. They let the working people down across this country. I rallied against Clinton when he was in office. I didn't vote for him in '96. I didn't vote for Gore in 2000.[178]

Moore's non-partisan although decisively left-of-center views above remain consistent throughout his body of work. Thus when Giles and Giles accuse him of being a Democrat, they are ignoring the history of a documentary filmmaker who has been so prolific and played such a critical role in shaping documentary in America, and arguably created a new political space that sometime can move beyond official partisan politics into another kind of political space, as we shall see later in this chapter.

To be sure, it is equally as irresponsible or untenable to argue that every item in a filmmaker's *œuvre* has to be constructed on the same principles. Yet in this case, the film's own construction of its political space becomes critical to trace. Importantly, Moore's attempt at constructing a more non-partisan point of view (or perhaps post-partisan, since it is anything but neutral) is evident in the sequence of the film Giles and Giles cite to substantiate their claim. They miss the sum of the visual and aural "arguments" that Moore has built into their film, contextualized within the larger sequence and that sequences role to within the film's narrative structure.

To demonstrate this critique, and to clarify the larger sequence to which Giles and Giles refer, the chart below that separates a transcription of the audio, various clips, and music on the left side and the visual imagery displayed on screen on the right side. Doing

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[178] Matt Lauer, Dateline NBC, interview transcript, http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/5239322/ns/dateline_nbc-newsmakers/t/moore-defends-incendiary-film/#.T4Tk-EoTOOd, accessed 3-2-12.

so is a critical to understanding the visual and aural choices of the filmmaker as rhetorical choices in a developing sequence.

Narration/Audio	Visual Evidence
	Fireworks in the sky, camera pans down to a wide shot of Gore on stage during election night, he is surrounded by a large cheering celebratory crowd. Behind him is a flashing sign that is illuminated in white lights, declaring "Florida Victory."
Moore: Was it all just a dream?	
There's Ben Affleck, he's often in my dreams, and the *Taxi Driver* guy (Robert De Niro), and there's Stevie Wonder, he looks so happy, as if a miracle had taken place.	Camera Zooms in on Gore, who is smiling and waving next to celebrities. Ben Affleck, Robert De Niro, and Stevie Wonder standing next to Gore.
Soundtrack: country tune	Camera cuts to Elections Night Decisions 2000 news footage and shows clips from the news broadcast of major networks projecting Gore will be the victor in the election.
(Synopsis of this section) [179] Moore: It all seemed to be going as planned. News clips of various networks calling states.	Montage of news clips of various networks calling states for Gore
Moore: Then something called the Fox News Channel called the election in favor of the other guy.	Crowds of supporters jumping up and down Fox News Logo
Fox election coverage declaring Bush wins the Presidency	Fox election coverage declaring Bush wins the Presidency
Other networks apologizing for their errors in predicting Florida, calling the election for Bush	Other networks apologizing for their errors in predicting Florida, calling the election for Bush.
Moore: What people don't know is that the person in charge of the decision desk that night, the man who called it for Bush, was Bush's first cousin John Ellis.	Footage from Fox News Studio. Photos of Ellis on the phone and in front of his desk in the newsroom.
How could someone like Bush get away with this?	Single of Bush smiling, footage is slowed down. Footage of Bush laughing, Sounds particularly sinister.
Well, first it helps if the man who is governor of the state in question is your brother.	Footage of the Bush brothers on a private jet.
Bush: you known something, we are going to win this election, mark my words. You can write it	Bush talking and laughing with his brother. Single of Jeb. Single of Bush talking to someone

[179] This line item is synopsized to limit the length of this chart, but it simply includes a montage of various news outlets predicting Gore was winning Florida and hence the election.

down.	off camera.
Moore: Second makes sure the chairman of your campaign is also the vote count woman and that her state has hired a company that is going to knock voters off the rolls who aren't likely to vote for you. . . .	Picture of her with Bush, single of her, exterior of an industrial building with a sign that says "Data Base Technologies." Woman in a nondescript office flipping through what appears to be a voting registration roster of names.
you can usually tell them by the color of their skin.	Black voters at the registration tables of a voting facility. Black voters at check in.
Then make sure your side fights like it's life or death.	Unspecified footage of people raging, looks like stampede. In a hallway, man tries to close door but cannot because of crowds of people.
James Baker: I think all this talk about legitimacy is way over-blown.	James Baker speaking directly to camera, lower thirds.[180] Former Secretary of State, Bush lawyer.
Protesters chanting: President Bush!	Protesters chanting, holding Bush signs.
Moore: And hope that the other side will just sit by and wait for the phone to ring, . . .	Democratic Leaders of Congress Congressman Richard Gephardt and Senator Tom Daschle sitting calmly not looking at camera, lower thirds.
and even if numerous independent investigations proved that Gore got the most votes.	Shows newspaper headlines, zooms in on "Latest Florida recount shows Gore won the election," from *The Paragraph*. Zooms out on "Gore could have won Florida votes with full recount, says media study," with no indication of the publication.
Jeffrey Toobin: If there was a statewide recount, under every scenario, Gore won the election.	CNN interviews with author Jeffrey Toobin, lower thirds: Florida Recount, Jeffrey Toobin, author, *Too Close to Call*.
Moore: it won't matter just as long as all your daddy's friends on the Supreme Court vote the right way.	Exterior of Supreme Court building, zooming out from behind the viewfinder of a camera. Footage of Supreme Court justices.
Gore in news brief: "While I strongly disagree with the course of the decision, I accept it."	Press conference footage from White House.
Senator Tom Daschel, "What we need now is acceptance, we have a new president-elect."	Press conference footage, lower thirds.
Moore: it turns out non of this was a dream, it's what really happened.	Footage of Gore's false victory on election night, with footage sped up.

[180] "Lower thirds" is a term in filmmaking used to refer to the text that identifies the name and credentials of an interviewee.

This is the scene Giles and Giles cite above as constitutive of Moore's conspiracy theories and partisanship. What is critical is that it occurs during the film's opening sequence, specifically within the first three minutes of the film, wherein Moore narrates what happens on election night of 2000 until Gore accepts Bush's election to the presidency.

In the terms introduced in the last chapter, the sequence is formed using scenes that share "a dramatic unity," marked explicitly as an act of story-telling. This sequence in particular has the clear auditory and visual markers of a beginning and ending (which is often more ambiguous in documentary), and its identity as a story is marked again in Moore's opening narration, asking "was it all a dream," and in his closing narration, "none of it was a dream, it's what really happened." This recursion -- this return to a point *after* the "standard liberal argument" about the Bush election is marked as a reality, not a dream, is also marked visually by Moore returning to the same footage of Gore on election night that he opens with, only this time, it is sped up. This is an interesting visual play on documentary's purported representation of truth - highlighting the contrast of "what really happened" with footage altered in post-production. We saw in the last chapter that such a sequence is a narrative within the larger narrative of the film. This one bears specific importance, as it is constitutes the introductory sequence, a critical series of moments that introduces the film, establishes its conventions, and sets the expectations for the audience. Although the sequence starts rehearsing the situation from the point of view of the liberal establishment, it ends with Gore accepting the election. The opening message from the film, therefore, is not going to be legalistic-- that situation as Moore sees it is "resolved," even if not to liberals' satisfaction.

Yet there is more at play. Carl Platinga explains that the opening sequence of a film serves an epistemological function:

> to raise the question or questions that the narrative will gradually answer. It initiates the cognitive processes of the spectator, encouraging hypothesis – and inference-making about the narrative and the knowledge it (ostensibly) imparts. The beginning of the film suggests frames of reference that the viewer may imply in comprehending the text. It serves to catalyze the dramatic movement of the narrative.[181]

Giles and Giles argue that Moore makes specific conspiratorial arguments, when in fact the sequence is structured around a series of questions -- the incredulous questions of liberals, but somewhat blunted in impact because of the framing that they are part of a "dream." Giles and Giles claim that Moore is at pains to assert the validity of the sectarian answers to these question, but instead, he is opening an inquiry, in the film's discourse, about Bush's relationships in the public sphere. The film is about supporters, not legalities.

The critics focus on Moore's statement, "How could someone like Bush get away with this?," and answer, "Moore answers his own question and turns his attention to Florida and Jeb Bush."[182] Yet these answers are not posed as definitive: Moore's answers each begin with "it helps if." Thus what Giles and Giles claim to be a arguments of a conspiracy theory are part of the structure to Moore's introduction to the film's narrative. In Platinga's terms, this sequence functions epistemologically, to let the audience know the problem the film sets out to examine, to set up the logic of the film and the viewers' expectations – "to open the viewers play of question and answer."[183] As seen in the transcription above, Moore never explicitly says these *are* the reasons why the

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[181] Platinga, "Rhetoric and Representation," 38-9.
[182] Giles and Giles, "The New Political," 39.
[183] Platinga, "Rhetoric and Representation," 39.

election was won by Bush, but instead illustrates (or points up) Bush's relationships within the institutions that played major roles in deciding the outcome of the campaign. In this sense, he is setting up not a polemic, but a rehearsal of what the audience thinks it knows, asking the audience to think critically about those connections. In so doing, he sets up a different kind of logic for the film, seen throughout the film's narrative, that actually lead the viewer to question whose interests are being served in the war with Iraq. I am not denying that the liberal questions do not take pride of place in this discussion, but it is important to note that he is *not* attacking the Right's spokespeople directly, but rather undermining them, usually in their own words. The Left is asked to question its assumptions about Bush's competence and how they analyze the political process, just as much as the Right might wonder how a lawyer can say that legitimacies are not really important.

Critically, when the quotations Giles and Giles use to substantiate their argument are put back into the context of the sequence, it reveals a considerably more non-partisan point of view than they assert, given that Moore critiques the Democrats as well as the Republicans.

One of the most tendentious passages tries to work in this way. For instance, Moore actually posits several suggestions to his question, "How does someone like Bush get away with this?" After the quotes Giles and Giles mention, he thus says, "And make sure your side fights like it's life or death," supported visually by what he contextualizes as a mob of conservative protesters, immediately followed by James Baker's direct address to the camera that defends Bush -- all representations that can be read as supporting the Republicans' acts as defending the nation.

To be sure, he then finishes his narration, "and hope that the other side will just sit by and wait for the phone to ring." The editor then cuts to the Democratic leaders of congress, Daschle and Gephart, sitting calmly in front of a desk, and, importantly, neither are looking at the camera: Daschle is looking down at his pen and Gephardt is looking at Daschle, which, juxtaposed with the previous images, shows a docile posturing and begs for a foley insert of crickets chirping -- they are *not* shown as actively defending their "truth."[184] While Moore's questioning of Bush's connections with the outcome of the election are the most explicit in this sequence, the opposing, more tacit argument is still fairly overt, seen in his final choice for supporting evidence: Al Gore and Senator Tom Daschel, very calmly relinquishing victory to the Republicans, and in the case of Daschle, encouraging the public to be complacent to the controversy with a rhetoric of acceptance. Moore's critique here of the Democrats is clearly evident -- they were sitting on their hands. The visual impression is buttressed by the above-mentioned quote from his interview with Matt Lauer, where he accuses the Democratic party of historically not standing up to the Republicans. This is no simple good versus evil narrative.

This sequence highlights the role of the editor in documentary in crafting the nonfiction narrative as an act of story-telling with rhetorical force, achieved in how they juxtapose sound and images to create meaning. Chanan explains the basic cinematic idea that the individual image "is only given its meaning through combination with other images, through montage, the process of editing."[185] For example, the juxtaposition of the Republican Party's response to the election controversy with the Democratic Party's response required a careful selection of footage. First, the specific moments of the

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[184] The foley artist is the person who creates sound effects for film.
[185] Chanan, "The Politics of Documentary," 47.

existing news footage to be used had to be picked. The editor found footage of the Democratic leaders on election night (presumably on election night -- the footage was not labeled for source, but contextualized as such), where they looked passive in the larger context of the massive controversy going on. That passivity was underscored, particularly in the context of the images that preceded it, with an almost violently enthusiastic crowd positioned as Bush supporters (although also unlabelled for source and only explained through context). The editor found a specific moment in that scene, one where the Democratic leaders were not making eye contact with each other or the camera and where they exuded weakness, particularly with Daschle looking down and fidgeting with his pen. Choosing these images and juxtaposing them in this way reveal the editor's intentions and set into play the meaning of the sequence, here by presenting a point of view that is less partisan than many would have expected from Moore, because these choices openly critique the Democratic Party.

In this way, Giles and Giles misread Moore's representation of what transpired on election night because they have neglected to look at the entirety of the sequence and the kind of set-up function that such an initial sequence has in film discourses. Merely pulling out quotes from Moore's narration neglects the question of how images and audio were juxtaposed to create meaning -- the scholars were functioning from the point of view of the "author" of the piece as an authority whose political agenda they thought they knew, rather than working from textual evidence. The sequence in the larger narrative served an important role as the introductory sequence that set the questions and the questioning strategy for *Fahrenheit 9/11* into place, a set of rhetorical choices of the

filmmaker that was lost in that scholarly oversight. In so doing, Giles and Giles misrepresented Moore's politics as conspiratorial and partisan.

Importantly, the transcript above shows that sequence analysis must play a part in understanding documentary film, not only narrative film. The sequence breakdown offered above is a fairly stand format for film theory, but not for many documentaries, especially where archival footage is presumed somehow to be less constructed than the carefully blocked scenes in narrative cinema. But editing of such documentary sequences, as the example here suggests, plays a critical role in crafting the story of documentary – as Ken Burns says, "all story is manipulation."[186] Michael Moore, like Ken Burns and documentarians before them, clearly know this manipulation (his strategic voice-overs and his speed-up of archival footage confirm that), and so he stands in the tradition that acknowledges that any film footage has in it questions of art and syntaxes of intelligibility. Knowing the political arguments alone do not do justice to the degree to which Moore's film sets up an original attempt at persuading his audience to an act of analysis rather than simply watching a piece of propaganda, as so many of the political documentaries of his era had offered. Instead, he has carefully started from "the known" for adherents of both political parties and then begins to lead both sides into new questions. *Fahrenheit 9/11* is by no means non-partisan, but it offers much more than a simple sectarian narrative to engage its audience.

[186] Sarah Klein and Thom Mason, Ken Burns, "Ken Burns Story," Redglass Pictures, 2012. This quote is especially poignant coming from Burns, who is considering to work in the vein of traditional documentary practices, showing how much more tacit his work of manipulation in storytelling is.

2. CRITIQUE OF HUMOR

Editing is not the only tool from narrative cinema that Michael Moore uses to create persuasive situations for his audience. Moore's career has been based in no small part on his use of irony to subvert the documentary conventions of non-biased observation, an approach that is seen not only in his narration but also in how the materials in his film are assembled. This use of humor is the second issue Giles and Giles critique, arguing that is gives the audiences "mixed messages" that undermine the film's ability to function effectively as a political intervention. "While the humor enhances he film's entertainment value and may have served a subversive role in disrupting dominant sources of power, it also raises doubt about the severity of issues that Moore explores."[187] Much like their claims about Moore's partisanship and conspiracy theories, the authors claim Moore's use of humor and irony in *Fahrenheit 9/11* positions the film as an entertainment narrative. Yet a closer look again reveals that Moore is trying a more nuanced presentation of political questions, rather than partisan answers, in his handling of film materials.

The sequence they identify as the most problematic in this regard beings at 00:19:44, which alleges Saudi officials and Ben Ladin's family members were allowed to fly out of the US after 9/11 when all other planes were grounded:

> He begins this segment with the musical cue, "We've got to get out of this place/If it's the last thing we ever do." Moore talks with Senator Byron Dorgan (D-ND) and Craig Unger (author of *House of Bush/House of Sand*) about the law enforcement irregularities of not interviewing the Bin Lauden family member before they left the country. At the end of this segment Moore inserts clips from the 1960's show Dragnet, where the humorously serious Joe Friday interrogates a witness. Such humor raises questions about the seriousness of the allegations.[188]

[187] Giles and Giles, "The Politics of the New," 42.
[188] Ibid., 43.

To exemplify their argument, Giles and Giles cite three examples of how Moore plays on documentary conventions - interventions by interview, music, and archival footage. Yet a closer look at Moore's inversion of these conventions can also be used to highlight the film's representation of the reflexive era of documentary, which Nichols explains:

> arose from a desire to make the conventions of representation themselves more apparent and to challenge the impression of reality, it uses many of the same devices as other documentaries but sets them on edge so that the viewer's attention is drawn to the device as the well as the effect.[189]

Moore rarely lets his audience forget that this is *his* set of questions, not *the* set of questions, and he has created his own screen persona as an "everyman" with whom an audience might attain a more personal relationship. That screen persona can be seen, in one sense, as harking back to television's documentary tradition, where newsmen appeared on camera as extensions of their news personae. But in Moore's case, he has taken that speaking position closer to that of an entertainer, a hybrid of fiction and non-fiction, as the story-teller appearing in the film.

The first convention that underscores Moore's character development in this film is his choice of music, *I Can't Believe It,* by the Animals, which is dropped in after Moore's narration:

> In the days after 9/11, all commercial and private airline traffic was grounded. Thousands of travelers were stranded, including Ricky Martin who was scheduled to appear at that night's Latin Grammys, but then who would want to fly?" [Music is cued.]

In documentary, music is conventionally used to contextualize the subject of the documentary, as the music plays underneath narration, purportedly expressing the position of speakers in the documentary, and/or reinforcing its images. Platinga explains

[189] Nichols, "Representing Reality," 33,.

the rhetorical choices creating the soundtrack in documentary in this way as creating the "experiential envelope" which creates a mood for the spectator.[190] He notes that Moore's use of irony in *Roger & Me* defies standard conventions and demonstrates "ironic uses of film technique, often including the justification of discordant images and music"[191] Moore's choice here is particularly ironic as the song was used in television shows about Vietnam – an era renowned for creating public scrutiny about the US government and war.[192] Like Giles and Giles, Platinga maintains that such use of irony undermines the content of the film, but none of these theorists place the rhetorical move within its historical context of reflexive filmmaking, where standard conventions are inverted to reveal the impossibility of a non-biased approach to filmmaking, seen here in the music cue, unmistakable for the Baby-Boom generation as a critical anthem. Thus both Moore's on screen persona and the music here occupy this storytelling position that combines fiction and non-fiction techniques as part of reflexive documentary filmmaking.

3. The Unreliability of Testimony

The next convention that Giles and Giles cite as problematic in *Fahrenheit 9/11* is Moore's use of interview, which Bill Nichols problematizes in *Representing Reality* (1992). In his assessment, even when the subjects are allowed to speak for themselves through testimony, like in feminist films, the way they are represented is still subject to the filmmaker's perspective in the edit, which may be cut to represent the viewpoints of

[190] Platinga, "Rhetoric and Representation," 166.
[191] Ibid., 167.
[192] This includes, being used in an episode of *Tour of Duty*, and in the opening credits of *China Beach*, two shows about Vietnam, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/We_Gotta_Get_out_of_This_Place.

the filmmaker.[193] In this way the interview can actually function as alternate narrator in the film's story, working as a second voice to support the filmmaker's point of view. Platinga explains that the filmmaker's point of view can also be seen in who they choose to interview and how they are framed.

Giles and Giles' analysis of the interview segments in *Fahrenheit 9/11* relies on traditional ideas about documentary and objectivity, an assessment that privileges one strategy for truth-telling: showing equal evidence for both sides of an argument and allowing the audience to draw their own conclusions. In terms of interviews this criteria would require the filmmaker to show both sides of a debate, offering a balanced perspective of opinions by showing interviews from both sides. This idea, however, is more closely linked with news journalism, one mode of documentary among many, seen in the practices of direct cinema that did not use interviews, preferring to "observe" their subject to convey meaning.

Yet Moore's interview approach again moved beyond both traditional documentary narrative ethics and its news prototypes, remaining true to a reflexive style of filmmaking by making the interview process transparent within the scene. Here again, an examination of Moore's actual approach to the interview reveals biases that would have been more useful to Giles and Giles in their argument. Giles and Giles fail to consider how an interview intrinsic to the sequence discussed above was staged in *Fahrenheit 9/11*, a particularly salient oversight, given that it was intercut with the interviews they did mention in their quote above -- as part of the larger sequence about how the Bush White House may or may not have let the Bin Laden family leave the country. That interview features retired FBI agent, Jack Cloonan, who served as a senior

[193] Bill Nichols, "Representing Reality," 54-5.

investigator of the FBI/CIA Al Qaeda taskforce, giving him a kind of credibility that separates him from the more partisan interviews that Giles and Giles mention.

However, his interview quickly shows that this is not the case, as he demonstrates overt political alignment with Moore's presumed politics. In the interview, Cloonan not only voices his opinion that it would be standard practice to interview the people who flew out of the country, but weighs in with another perspective, one that goes beyond describing procedure alone and moves into a deeply emotional appeal. Moreover, a more conventional film soundtrack is used underneath the interview, evoking an emotional response in the viewer, as Cloonan asks:

> try to imagine what those poor bastards were feeling when they were jumping out of that building to their death. Those young guys, those cops, the fireman who ran into that building and never asked a question. And they are dead and their families lives are ruined. They will never have peace. If I had to inconvenience a member of the Bin Laden family with a subpoena or grand jury I wouldn't loose a minute of sleep over it Mike.

The rapport between subject and interviewer quickly becomes evident here in Cloonan's use of the informal "Mike" to address Moore. This may well be read as Moore choosing footage that reflects his own point of view -- and "borrowing" the credibility of the interviewee rather than maintaining misleading images of impartiality, as an FBI/CIA liaison calls Bush's protocol into question, not a liberal filmmaker.

Here, Moore is again signaling his own presence in the film. His choice to include this address shows an acute departure from the conventional ethics of documentary interview techniques, which is reemphasized by the inclusion of Moore's vocal prompts, which can be heard off-screen as Moore agrees with Cloonan. Moore goes even further encourages Cloonan through the use of leading prompts. Importantly the editor could easily have edited out the audio of Moore's side of the interview, without

disrupting the visual continuity of the interview – an elementary practice in editing documentary interviews. Technically, cutting out audio from off screen is very simple, since one can edit it out without disrupting the continuity of the visual footage, left intact -- the missing audio reads like a pregnant pause in the interview and can be replaced with "room tone." Thus the agent's informal use of Mike could have easily been taken out, particularly as it was the last word in the soundbite. Yet the choice to keep it in is again characteristic of self-reflexive documentary, where the methods of the filmmaker are transparent and often reveal themselves as ironic, as they demystify the interview an "objective" source of information.

In this case, the irony emerges as a problem of double-voicing for the audience to sort out. Moore is, for conservatives, unreliable and, for liberals, more reliable, and an FBI/CIA agent normally enjoys the opposite reputations. Yet here, the two are juxtaposed, revealed as friendly with each other, and both agreeing on the Bush administration's deviance from protocol.

4. Irony and Infotainment in the New Documentary

Certainly, we are overall in a new era of using irony for didactic purposes, as seen not only throughout the history of Moore's work in reflexive documentary, but in the proliferation of ironic news shows like John Stewart's *The Daily Show* and Stephen Colbert's *The Colbert Report*-- other sources of "news" that greatly disturb some adherents of conventional news, but which are increasingly popular, especially among younger audiences. Yet this is anything but new. Such a use of satire for political purposes dates back to the Greeks, and in cinema, it has been present from very early on, at least from the time of such films as Charlie Chaplin's *The Great Dictator* (Chaplin and

Dryden, 1940) and culminating in films like *The Dr. Strangelove: Or How I Learned to Stop Worrying and Love the Bomb* (Kubrick, 1964) and beyond. Such films often used humor to conceal very serious critiques that were too unpopular at the time to discuss explicitly.

Moore's use of irony dates back to *Roger and Me,* marking in one sense the onset of a new, intensely reflexive documentary that functioned in opposition to the observational documentaries of the direct cinema era that preceded it and by playing off the conventions of the news documentaries with which the US audience had become increasingly familiar.[194] Like Colbert and Stewart, Moore understands that few audiences will stick with difficult work without some help, and they have chosen to use ironic humor, the humor of double-voicing. The element of "entertainment" -- "infotainment" -- has been an integral factor in Moore's wild success in bringing documentary back to the big screen with his film *Roger & Me* and then again with *Fahrenheit 9/11*. These films have drawn in larger audiences than traditional documentaries on series political subjects, precisely because of the levity they use to discuss the issues.

Giles and Giles argue that the use of such comedy moments evoked by ironic juxtapositions works against documentary. Yet perhaps it does a greater service to the issues by widening the audiences and encouraging at least a kind of critical thinking around the issues. Additionally, in thinking about the basic structural technique of juxtaposition and contrast that is at the heart of irony: perhaps it is not that humor undermines the seriousness of the issues, but that the seriousness of the issues is

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[194] Another sign of this awareness of new status for the documentary might also be the phenomenon of the mockumentary, originated on a grand scale by Rob Reiner's 1984 *This Is Spinal Tap*.

underscored by how ironic absurdities are juxtaposed with the more serious moments of the film. The sequence that Giles and Giles address above, beginning with The Animals' music cue, immediately follows a very serious and emotional exposition into the events of 9/11, so it was a particularly poignant time to use levity in the narrative -- to prevent the sequence from staying at the level of emotion rather than helping the audience look at the sequence. Again, to figure out how that appeal can work, it is critical to not just look at the contents of the sequence itself, but in its juxtaposition with the sequences that precede and follow it, building the larger narrative arc of the film. As such, the use of humor at such moments provides tremendous levity for audiences who may not be willing to sit through a formal two-hour exposition of the issues surrounding the war in the Iraq, but who would (and did) sit through the documentary.

This contrast can also be seen in the juxtaposition of the interviews with a clip from the iconic TV detective drama *Dragnet*, which proceeds Cloonan's above-cited emotional appeal to the audience --- the third convention of film that Giles and Giles cite in their critique as detrimental to the documentary. The use of archival footage is particularly important to documentary, because it purportedly substantiates the primary sources for the subjects in the film. Yet Moore uses this technique ironically in extending his agent's interview, asking "Isn't it standard practice to interview the family members of murder suspects?" Giles and Giles frame this clip as a simple humorous ploy by Moore, but a closer reading of the sequence structure shows it bears greater meaning in shading the subject of the film. In the clip Moore uses, more parts usually edited out of film used in news documentaries are retained. Here, a witness tries to get out of being questioned, claiming "unlike you, my time is worth money" and arguing, "I pay your

taxes," all of which shows Moore making connections between business interests and arbiters of the law, connections that he had also made between George H. W. Bush and the Saudis. But Moore is blaming neither or both parties, just lining them up for ironic effect at a particular moment and for longer-term impact. Giles and Giles claim that such ironic techniques inhibit the efficacy of the film's political discourse, but this claim privileges older notions of documentary's truth claims, the sort of logic reflexive film seek to address, here in the use of irony.

Again, since *TV Nation* and *Roger & Me*, the use of irony in reflexive political news and documentary has become standardized on the screens of American public life with shows like *The Daily Show* and the *Colbert Report*. A recent study shows younger generations are internalizing them differently from older generations, as Julia Fox documents in her article, *No Joke: A Comparison of Substance in The Daily Show with John Stewart and Broadcast Network Television Coverage of the 2004 Election Campaign*. That these viewing habits are changing is in large part generational. Fox reports that the 2004 elections saw the highest turnout among voters under 30 in more than a decade. While this could very well be in part due to *Fahrenheit 9/11*, the authors attributed it to the actual focus of their study, John Stewart's *The Daily Show*, which uses a similar model of irony to address serious social and political issues. The article cites a study that notes:

> The percentage of under-30 respondents who said they relied on comedy shows for campaign information is more than double the percentage found in a similar Pew study in 2000 (9%), while the percentage of under-30 voters who regularly relied on broadcast network news declined to almost half of what was found in 2000 (39%) (Pew Research Center, 2004a).[195]

[195] Julia Fox, *No Joke: A Comparison of Substance in The Daily Show with John Stewart and Broadcast Network Television Coverage of the 2004 Election Campaign,* Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media,14 Apr, 2012, 1.

Fox's study found that there was a gap in perception of these new shows blending news and humorous irony, splitting between older audiences and younger audiences, the former distrusting them as a reliable source for campaign coverage, and the later being critical of standard news campaign coverage. When televised news shows use the trope of irony to frame their messages, they utilize different structural conventions than documentary film or than Stewart's or Colbert's shows do -- a different which we will look at in the following chapter. However Fox's research provides an important generational context for Moore's use of humor in regards to audience reception. The scholar's work showed that the content of the message was retained better by the younger generation than from other sources of media, showing that they were able to separate the ironic style of communication from the content it addressed -- or, as research on cognition suggests, information that needs to be processed as difficult may also be retained better.

In this sense, Giles and Giles present a fairly conservative perspective on the role of interview or "real life" film in the documentary when they fail to analyze irony *in Fahrenheit 9/11* in terms of its structures and conventions. They always refer to older conventions, especially those from TV news documentaries, a set of outdated expectations of documentary discourse as "non-biased" that Moore's reflexive film cutting is at pains to undercut. While the use of irony serves to entertain in these cases (by juxtaposing points of view to show them as absurdly contrasting), it does not detract from the seriousness of the filmmaker's point of view, and it might, following Fox, actually appeal to younger audiences who are internalizing the political messages therein. Here again, Giles and Giles take a conservative approach to analyzing documentary.

5. CRITIQUE OF VIRTUAL REALITY

Giles and Giles take up one final approach to their critique of Moore: they criticize *Fahrenheit 9/11*'s use of "virtual reality" as an inappropriate appeal to the audience, as a pernicious pathos. They define this virtual reality as a juxtaposition of images captured at different times and different locations, than cut together to create a seamless representation of events. While this sounds like one traditional definition of montage, a technique inherent to documentary production, the scholars claim that Moore's goal is the creation of a hyperreal media spectacle that manufactures evidence. That spectacle and manufactured evidence, in turn, allow the documentary film to exercise a visceral appeal to pathos, which ultimately "serves in the end to accentuate ambivalence and uncertainty surrounding authenticity in US political culture, leaving the US pubic skeptical about most of what they consume."[196] One must again consider in more detail what Giles and Giles construe as manufactured evidence, and how their example obscures the structural function of style in the documentary text that so many documentary filmmakers have along acknowledged, particularly in regards to montage.

The chief example they use to support their claims that Moore manufactured visual/aural evidence was in the montage that retells the events of 9/11 (00:13:18-00:16:34 in the film). The evidence they use to justify this claim is so problematic that it almost discredits the book's editors. Giles and Giles argue in a fashion almost embarrassing for film scholars:

> The representation of 9/11 does not reflect the real-time moment that it portrayed, as the planes hit the towers twenty seconds apart in the film rather than seventeen minutes on that fateful morning.[197]

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[196] Giles and Giles, "Virtual Realism," 45.
[197] Ibid.

Clearly, no audience outside of a 1970s art house cinema would sit through a real-time representation of the events of 9/11. They are pointing to a sequence assembled according to common documentary practice, where time and space must be reconstituted to represent a historical event in film. If this is manipulation of evidence, then Giles and Giles must deny that documentary can provide any evidence at all -- their judgments rest on what seems to be complete ignorance of the basic film technique that virtually every documentary filmmaker from the beginning of the form has acknowledged.

Their example deteriorates further when they cite an online interview with the Supervising Sound Editor of *Fahrenheit 9/11*, Gary Rizzo, who explained how they reconstructed the events of 9/11 during the post-production sound mix:

> Because some of the audio that accompanied the visual images contained, "really bad sound," they inserted "another source for the same piece of audio," all of which came from the 9/11 terrorist attacks. In some circumstances, however, alternative sounds were not available, so "other elaborate audio restoration actions had to be taken." The goal throughout was to make it real. As the films attempt to move us closer and closer to the real, the "real becomes that which is manufactured in the editing studio."[198]

Rizzo's claims are hard to address without recourse to the interview as a whole, but this kind of restoration of documentary evidence is quite common, as feeds from different sources are often used to complement each other. Audio restoration actions are normal in post-production to clean up "dirty" sound. During an interview with Strother Bullins, Rizzo explained that process in greater detail, again in terms quite common for technical restorations from news and court reporting to restored feature films:

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[198] Ibid. The abrupt use of short quotations made me question the source of this material, and when I checked the link they cited was no longer active and I could not find the original article anywhere on the web. However, I found a similar article featuring a similar interview with Rizzo, which represented an entirely different understanding of the process in postproduction, which I will quote from shortly.

> During an interview Rizzo explained this process. We did a restoration pass for every piece of audio that's there, a sound editorial pass to find out how each piece fell in line with everything else, and a mix pass within the 5.1 environment. With every sound, we intently questioned all sonic and emotional integrity. For the sequence, every sound was captured on the day of the attacks within a few blocks of the World Trade Center.[199]

This passage indicates that while the result is a montage of sounds and images from various sites and moments of 9/11, the editors and technicians were aware of the boundaries between supplements and falsification. It thus seems odd that Giles and Giles consider the sequence as "manufactured" evidence.

Montage has always been evaluated as an attempt to project the historical time and space of representation to the audience -- to heighten reality, not manufacture it by showing more than a single eye might have been able to catch. Chanan writes about how this is done with source material and montage in documentary:

> Of course it can be manipulated, and is often obscured on the editing table to fit the temporality corresponding to the argument of the film. This is a function, for example, of stock shots stored in film archives and libraries, which represent generic and iconic instances of city scenes and landscapes, industry, personalities, any sights whatever, classified under various headings for easy retrieval. It is a fundamental property of the general theory of montage to be able to use them this way, and depends only on there not being anything in the shot that prevents its incorporation into the time-image of whatever films its going into.[200]

The particular sequence that Giles and Giles refer to is highly stylized montage, clearly aimed to provoke emotion from the viewer by presenting visual and auditory samples that nonetheless sought to represent the point of view of someone who was there. To be sure, what Moore's team produced begged the audience to identify with its material, as if they had been there.

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[199] Strother Bullins, 9/11 Fahrenheit, surespot blog, 1-17-10, http://shureaudio.blogspot.com/2010/01/strother-bullins-talks-to-skywalker.html website accessed 3-6-12.
[200] Chanan, "The Politics," 110.

But most of the older members of his audience had in fact "been there," watching endless news footage for the better part of a week after the disaster, as the only media feeds that existed. So Moore's team had the difficult job of re-telling what some of the audience already knew, so that that knowledge could be redeployed in another argument. The sequence they came up with was sensitive to what the audience already knew, rather than presenting a master narrative from an all-knowing documentary perspective. It begins with a black screen, suspending both narration and image to privilege natural sound captured on 9/11 – the audience must inject their own images as they hear the sounds of the explosions and buildings crashing against screams from people on the ground. Rizzo explains the intentions of the filmmakers in this choice:

> Michael told us that he wanted to make this a dedication and a tribute to the people that were there and on the streets within five or six blocks of the World Trade Center when the terrorist attack happened. He wanted to present the scene in a truthful way, and in a way that people haven't experienced it to better simulate what it was like to be there on that day.[201]

Moore expresses the conflicting demands placed on such a sequence, with contrasting notions that the representation should be truthful but also a simulation. He thus acknowledge that "truthful" and "objective" might not be synonymous, and that narratives of objectivity and subjectivity are not mutually exclusive in documentary. As Chanan explains, "they are both present at the same time."[202]

In terms of filmmaking technique, Platinga explains how such creative representations in montage exercise the standard function of style:

> Style at the service of information transmission does not preclude poetic interludes and stylistic flourishes. A primary function of style is present projected

[201] Strother Bullins, *9/11 Fahrenheit*, surespot blog.
[202] Chanan, "The Politics," 53.

> world information, to develop discursive voice, or to cause an effect in the spectator sympathetic to the textual project.[203]

Thus Moore is using this style in full knowledge of its rhetorical appeal, of how it can evoke pathos and remind the spectator what was at stake in honoring the people murdered on 9/11.

The creative liberties that Moore takes with this sequence – most notably, only using audio against a black screen and slowing down footage of cinders in the air and feet running -- are used in ways that remain true to the ethics of reflexive filmmaking. Reflections on the limits and goals of artistic expression are often addressed by Moore, as he does, for example, during his interview with Matt Lauer. There, he explains the distance between his film as political speech and the political campaigning he was accused of in the media:

> I mean, if politics was my main motivation, I would be doing politics. But I'm a filmmaker. First and foremost the art has to come before the politics, otherwise, you don't get -- the politics don't work.[204]

For Moore, style and the use of particular film techniques are part of what makes this cinema and not a exercise in strict journalism. The result of such a process, he feels, is a creative treatment of actuality -- not a falsehood or an outright fiction, by any measure, and definitely not manufactured in the pejorative sense used by Giles and Giles.

The critiques made here by Giles and Giles -- that virtual realism, irony/humor, and conspiracy theories mar *Fahrenheit 9/11* as a documentary -- may not warrant the attention I have given them, no matter their inclusion in a major collection of scholarly essays on the documentary. Yet they represent the problems of academic critics of

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[203] Platinga, "Rhetoric and Representation," 152-3.
[204] Matt Lauer, Dateline NBC, interview transcript, http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/5239322/ns/dateline_nbc-newsmakers/t/moore-defends-incendiary-film/#.T4Tk-EoTOOd, accessed 3-2-12.

documentary film -- academics who all too often do not share the practical experiences that early documentary theorists (themselves often documentary filmmakers, as we have seen) relied upon, and often outside of the formal field of film study are not educated about filmmaking practices. This is not a new problem, one commonly lamented, seen the in the written works of Richard Leacock.[205]

The critiques Giles and Giles level against *Fahrenheit 9/11* ignore its historical position as an evolution beyond earlier forms of documentary into a new world, where considerably more archival footage and media coverage exists, and so where the documentary team has to compose a point of view from many existing materials rather than to create it from the ground up. Giles and Giles are relying on typical misconceptions about documentary filmmaking structure and style, as well as its larger context within film history, especially its position in the era of reflexivity in documentary. In this era, as we have seen, the rhetorical, stylistic, and content choices made by Moore and his staff are much more explicit than they were in earlier eras. Moore in many ways goes out of his way to reveal the larger fallacies that an audience might have about truth telling in documentary. And in addition, Moore points out how murky the line between fiction and fact is, even in the use of "real" footage in his work -- an especially appropriate gesture, given his critique of the hegemonic discourse that has supported the war in Iraq.

What the passage readings I have provided do not do is take on what Moore specifically is trying to do in provoking an audience with a new kind of political speech -- not just a polemics (as he is charged with having provided his audiences), but a more

[205] Leacock's animate dislike for academics can be seen in his article, In Defense of the Flaherty Tradition, among others, available online, http://richardleacock.com/In-Defense-of-the-Flaherty-Tradition.

overt dialogue between himself-as-filmmaker (his public persona) and their own lives. Let us now turn back to the question of heuristics, to see how Moore's work calls for a more nuanced discussion of this generation of documentary as an act of interpretation within the public sphere and with rhetorical intent of a new sort.

From Critique to Documentary Theory: Some Extrapolations

Utterly dismissive of the film's power in its theatrical release, Giles and Giles claim that *Fahrenheit 9/11* is an entertainment driven narrative with limited instrumentality in the public sphere, "virtual realism, humor and conspiracy theories are limited in activating substantial social reform."[206] We have seen that they provide what at best might be called incomplete and at worst inaccurate readings of sequences in the film, as they question Moore's handling of the materials as virtual realism, using irony as humor, and allege that its goal is to disseminate partisanship/conspiracy theories. Moore's use of film techniques and conventions is much more consciously considered than that.

Let us turn back to the question of what this generation of reflexive feature documentary implies for scholars who do not want to replicate the too-simple judgments made by academic film scholars who often pay more attention to ideology than to filmmaking. I believe that the very stance of reflective documentary filmmaking can also quite profitably be described as a turn towards a more rhetorical concept of documentarianism, one more sensitive to Aristotle's delineation of rhetoric as acts of

[206] Giles and Giles, "Virtual Realism," 37.

communication that appeal to ethos, pathos, and logos rather than the strict logocentric of the purportedly "objective" face of documentary.

The first issue to consider is how a film and a filmmaker are positioned within their political-historical context. Moore was a vanguard of the reflexive era of documentary filmmaking with the release of *Roger & Me*, which broke box office records at the time of its release. The popularity of that film and Moore's subsequent work established his voice in documentary, which moves beyond the conventional practices of documentary that project "objectivity" in ways designed to render transparent the assumptions about the truth of representation in them. Most notable in that move is Moore's use of juxtaposition rather than authoritative, strictly partisan rhetoric. If sometimes he is heard as a voice-of-god voiceover, he appears onscreen as an often bumbling everyman just looking to figure things out (to be sure, a pose of great aesthetic provenance). This raises questions of how film representation styles correspond to questions of the ethos of representation, which Moore seems to consciously answer to in the film's trailer and set up in its beginning sequences.

Those ethical issues comes to the fore in Moore's approach to his subjects, which changed from that of the authoritative newsman or the feminist concerned with not stealing the voices of her subjects. The era of reflexive filmmaking as practiced by Moore is echoed in many ways in the work of John Stewart and Stephen Colbert in "news," and in Reiner's *Spinal Tap* as reflecting what documentary biographies are "supposed" to do. Moore is confronted with the issue of making a documentary of an almost over-documented incident with under-documented political implications -- a problem of analysis more than representation. And so he begins to tease out the

particular documentary weight of archival news footage versus interview in light of his own and his team's intervention into public ways of knowing.

The interview with Jack Cloonan reveals much about Moore's approach to the "truth claims" of this kind of documentary evidence. In that interview, the audience hears Moore's probing in a manner that could be read as aggressively, as he audibly shapes the content of the interview. At the same time the editors chose to leave that probing in, which again highlights the technique of reflexive filmmaking, and perhaps reveals that the interviewee, not Moore, was responsible for producing some of the more incendiary statements about the Bush presidency. While Giles and Giles claim reflexive filmmaking techniques cause distrust in audiences, Moore's handling of the material perhaps does the opposite, as the audience members witness the mediating effects of the filmmaker and the eye-witness alike. This more truthful approach to the documentary aspects of interviewing may garner trust from audiences, as is indicated in the findings of Fox.

Moore's attention to the documentary ethos of representation is not his only acknowledgment of what reflexive filmmaking requires of its practitioners. His use of cinematography and his awareness of its rhetorical force also emerged in our discussion of sequences inadequately read by Giles and Giles. Moore arguably created new standards for the craft of documentary film based in the present, just as Ken Burns had in animating evidence from the past and making it speak its truth. And here, the reader must distinguish between what footage is from the archives and how the Moore team uses it in the narrative.

As an example: Giles and Giles talk about Moore's use of the famous footage of Bush in an elementary school classroom, reading to students at the moment he hears about the second plane's attack:

> We are situated on the same level with the press cameras filming the event as we witness Bush's indecision. Because Bush is sitting with the children, the camera looks down on him – situating us above him and diminishing his stature.[207]

The way this is phrased implies Bush is seated at the same level as the children, and that the cameras are towering over him-- and that Moore arranged it that way, using camera conventions drawn from narrative cinema. Not surprisingly, these assessments fall short of describing the situation. From a technical point of view, the camera is indeed slightly elevated above its subject -- but this was news footage, and not Moore's own, and the elevation is by virtue of the practice of putting the camera on "sticks" – a tripod, and by no means dramatic enough to consider it a rhetorical move that questions his authority and masculinity, as the authors suggest.

Cinematography by Moore's cameraperson does come into play frequently, especially in the scenes with interviewee Craig Unger, author of *House of Sand/House of Bush* (2007). These shots featured the White House prominently in the background, which align the speaker with official Washington. For conservatives, such a picture is a sign of respect, emphasizing the legitimacy of the speaker in his alignment with the powers that be -- the footage resembles the many "official" interviews, shot by news media in the White House. This aesthetic choice of the camera operator can thus be read as an appeal to this particular ethos, elevating the credibility of the speaker. Or in a more liberal reading of that connection, we must remember that Platinga's notes how

[207] Giles and Giles, 37.

interviews in documentary are used to buttress the argument of the filmmaker.[208] In this reading, this witness *knows* the White House and its purported evils from the inside. Aesthetics allows Moore a shot that can work both ways, for different audiences.

Giles and Giles' critiques thus seem overall naive about the camera for reflexive cinema. They do not distinguish archival footage from that made by the filmmaking team, they seem to lack knowledge of standard editing procedures (their comment on time problems with the representation of the tower collapses), and they seem oblivious about post-production standards (e.g. for cleaning up distorted sound). As such, they did not see that Moore was at great pains to create an active documentary space for a theatrical audience. On the one hand they acknowledge filmic editing practices when they write, "the successive explosions are unnerving – much louder then the television news – creating visceral moments of living in a war zone."[209] Yet in so doing they collapse the differing spaces of representation created by televised viewing and the viewing on ones home television. Even that comment about sound is misleading, since theater sound systems are surround sound while television sound is neither constructed nor mixed with that kind of speaker alignment in mind -- differences that we will examine more closely in the following chapter. These critics ignore the logos inherent in aspects of cinematic and technical styles of representation and so relegate their impacts to pathos, at most.

A more important methodological point begins to emerge here that is important for reflexive cinema, but which will become even more critical in more active documentary events, such as those around Ken Burns concerning his film's ideology, and

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[208] Platinga, "Rhetoric and Representation," 162.
[209] Ibid., 33.

those we will discuss in the next chapter. Analysis of documentary films becomes a content analysis that privileges their own readings. They ignore such factors as the primary marketing tools of the film, its trailer and poster as preconditioning what audiences will tend to read out of the film. The American poster for the film, for example, features Moore and Bush walking hand and hand in front of the White House. Moore has been digitally composited into the place originally occupied by a Saudi male -- an image later revealed in the films narrative.[210] Moore has a very silly comedic expression on his face and is looking directly at the viewer. Bush is looking to the left of the frame and smiling, as well, appearing naïve and clueless the way he is portrayed in the film (as a puppet of private interests). The heading of the poster reads, "Controversy…What controversy?," alluding to both the controversy around the film's distribution (a topic that saw much press, as endemic to/ indicative of the larger controversy about the film's contents). The explicit digital editing done to this image sets the tone for the film as ironic, witty, and self-reflexive.

The trailer for *Fahrenheit 9/11* also works to establish the creditability of the film and Moore in similar ways. It displays the film's award at Cannes, then "From the Oscar winning filmmaker of *Bowling for Columbine*."[211] The trailer immediately showcases Moore's classic unapologetic approach to filmmaking and reminds audiences of his canonical subject matter choices – corrupt business and political practices. The text read as a voiceover reinforces this point: if you think the government is secretive [excerpt from the sequence on the planes] and corporations are greedy [scene from a corporate conference about profit-making], "you haven't seen nothing yet." The trailer then gets

[210] Film poster or Fahrenheit 9/11 may be accessed online at http://www.impawards.com/2004/fahrenheit_nine_eleven_ver1.html.
[211] The film trailer can be seen at http://www.fahrenheit911.com/trailer/

more cinematic, reminding the audience about Moore's typical antics: showing him trying to get congressmen to get their kids to enlist and serve in Iraq and then circling past the White House in an ice-cream truck, stating from the loudspeaker, "members of congress I would like to read to you the patriot act." These scenes hark back to his chase of GM president Roger Moore in *Roger & Me*. We see the same approach to filmmaking in the trailer that we do in the film, which presents evidence to Moore's arguments in an overt and unapologetic humorous voice, reducing politics to ironic juxtapositions of equally absurd positions. Audiences members should not have been surprised as they walked into theaters -- and these reactions need to be factored into analyses of the film's impact, along with Julia Fox's research about how audiences today, in the era of *The Daily Show* and *The Colbert Report* are no longer as shocked as they might have been the days of *Roger & Me*, when the great men of industry, commerce, and government were made fun of.

Finally, *Fahrenheit 9/11* suffered much the same kind of public response as Ken Burns' documentary had: the public began to interact with it early and often, responding to Moore and the films website. Several films were created to address Moore's claims, which constitute a kind of interactive conversation with *Fahrenheit 9/11*, asking the audiences of these films to decide where the truth lies.

In the same volume as Giles and Giles' article, another chapter (Chapter 3) does take up these filmic responses, but what has received less attention are the materials Moore published in relationship to the film that were as much part of the publicity of the film. They sustained movement and discourse around the issues addressed in his film in a much more immediate and timely fashion in the public sphere.

For example, the official film website offers teaching guides for educators, suggested literature readings, and free chapters from several books, including *House of Sand/House of Bush* (2007) by Craig Unger. Importantly, it also has a link titled, "How can I help the soldiers?," with links on organizations created to help soldiers injured in the war, and to an organization that sends books to soldiers stationed overseas. This was an important move rhetorically for Moore, since the war in Iraq became synonymous with a discursive binary constructed around two propositions: with us or against our soldiers. In addition, the website prominently features a link back to Moore's home site, which is an interactive base for communication with him, including links to Facebook and Twitter, among others. Finally, the DVD of the film was released in conjunction with the book *The Official Fahrenheit 9/11 Reader*, which the website describes as "the full movie transcript of *Fahrenheit 9/11*, as well as supplementary material not included in the final cut of the movie."[212]

The discussion around the film also continued briskly in other media: two important books followed on the heels of *Fahrenheit 9/11*. The first was Michael Moore's own *Will They Ever Trust Us Again?: Letters from the War Zone*, which includes letters written to Moore by soldiers serving in Iraq over the course of the year after the film's release -- soldiers reacting to a film that critiques the war from a highly emotional standpoint.[213] Also in 2008, Moore released *Mike's Election Guide 2008,* which feature his same critiques of the Democrats seen in *Fahrenheit 9/11,* with chapters like, "Do Democrats still Drink from a Sippy Cup and Sleep with the Light On?" and

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[212] Michael Moore, *The Official Fahrenheit 9/11 Reader* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2004); <www.michaelmoore.com/books-films/official-fahrenheit-911-reader>.
[213] Michael Moore, *Will They Ever Trust Us Again? Letters from the Warzone* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2004).

"How Many Democrats Does it Take to Lose the Most Winnable Election in American History?"[214] This book substantiates his claim quoted earlier that he is critiquing both sides of the political aisle. Taken together, the pair extends Moore's discussion with his audience into a second phase that grows out of the first, including an explicit talk-back to his potential critics.

To add his own persona to the mix, Michael Moore followed the film's release with a "20 state 60 city tour" called "Slackers of the World Unite," aimed to mobilize the young voters of America, who were considered the demographic least likely to vote in the 2004 elections.[215] In his small way, Moore might have contributed to the unprecedented number of youth vote turned out for the 2004 election that Fox reported on.

In sum, Moore is aware of his work as an ongoing rhetorical argument, not a single discussion, and he deals very explicitly with the ethos, pathos, and logos inherent in his work construed as a persuasive argument, one in the style of reflexive filmmaking. As we have seen, Moore is cautious about the ethos of his filmmaking, what he claims as its truth; he is equally cautious about manipulating his audiences through false pathos, preferring to direct them away from the reactive and into the logical structure of argument on both sides of the politics spectrum. His use of ironic humor answers to that caution, as well. Moreover, he is fastidious about the logos of the art of filmmaking he responds to -- the logos of the medium at a particular point in time, not just of the situation involved.

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[214] Michael Moore, *Mike's Election Guide* (New York: Grand Central Publishing, 2008).
[215] http://www.michaelmoore.com/words/mikes-letter/michael-moore-on-tour-slackers-of-the-world-unite

Looking at the film in this way shows us that, in Moore's handling, the argument he presented needs to be seen as overtly persuasive, accommodating the classical Aristotelian elements of ethos, pathos, and logos. That is, Moore understood his documentary filmmaking as an intervention into public discourse that was to include a complete event, not just the film -- a definition that Ken Burns, for instance, had not anticipated as explicitly in his focus on authorship and authority over a message. Moore understands Aristotle's triad of ethos, pathos, and logos as the basis of his persuasive act, which seeks to delegitimize the Bush administration and the war in Iraq.

As a filmic text, this proof is necessarily constituted in what Chanan calls the "representational space" and "spatial practice" of documentary. And as such, Moore works within the conventions of filmmaking in general and documentary in particular to create his filmic rhetorical intervention. Thus he establishes the credibility of the various speakers in documentary through the use of archival footage and interviews with lower thirds; he appeals to the audience, the film's pathos, through the "experiential music" of the soundtrack and montage; his argument is structured solidly in the logos, with clear contrasting points of view and in the evidence used to support the argument (archival footage, still images, interviews, newspaper headlines, government documents, among others). But the technical elements of the film are also supplemented by the stylistic trope of irony, all of which work together to create the representational space of the persuasive argument – a space initially conceived for theatrical viewing as opposed to televised or online viewing, but then extended into other dimensions of public argument by means of his interviews and response books.

The case of reflexive documentary thus calls for an expanded consideration of documentary structure and practice, moving beyond what most conventional (and historical) discussions of documentary discourse has provided. Moore and the reflexive documentary position explicitly question assumptions about documentary's truth claims, aesthetics, and instrumentality in this new era of technology and filmmaking. Critically, this film is very typical of the current era's taste in the appropriate style and aesthetics for documentary filmmaking. In this case, as in the history of documentary theory reviewed in previous chapters, shows that filmmakers are often ahead of the theorists.

Moore refuses to rehash the older arguments about whether a documentary film is more or less true or objective. Instead, he builds into his text a stylized transparency, a primer about how that purported "truth" is actually constructed in the act of filmmaking -- a statement that may actually work in the service of illuminating truth from a more situated, privatized space in the public sphere rather than as a voice of god narrator, an invisible hand, or an author who assumes the authority over news reports.

This generation of documentary can thus profitably be considered a new era of documentary instrumentality, and with nascent technologies it is hard to know what the results of those interactive and multi-media platforms identified above will be for engendering public debate and discussion under the now extended rubric of "documentary film" -- or perhaps, now, "documentary acts." What we do know is that a film *like Fahrenheit 9/11* marks a significant transition in regards to the epistemology of documentary films which are taking an increasingly more important role in shaping the landscape of American public memory through discourse and community building. And

it is also a challenge to the evolution of documentary theory, as we shall pursue in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 4:

The New Televised Documentary:
Reality Tv at the New Frontier of Documentary

Following the blockbuster success of the feature film *Juno* (2007), about the stigmas and personal struggles around being a pregnant teenager, the senior vice president of series development for a major cable network noticed that the US was ranked as having the highest rates of teenage pregnancy and among industrialized nations.[216] In response to this epidemic, that VP, Jan Hoffman, partnered with The National Campaign to Prevent Teen and Unplanned Pregnancy to create a reality tv show that was "intended to document and deter teen pregnancy, to shed light on this issue and to show girls how hard teen parenting is."[217] That series quickly became very popular with US and international audience, generating a spin-off that was even more popular, with ratings in 2010-2011 that left the show ranking second among all cable programming for the widely sought-after 18-34 demographic[218] These two became the network's top shows, with that

[216] Jan Hoffman, "Fighting Teenage Pregnancy," *New York Times,* April 10, 2011, 1.
[217] Sun Feifei "Teen Moms are Reality TV's new stars. Is This A Good Thing?" *Time Magazine*, Vol. 178 Issue 3, p58.
[218] Rick Kissel, "Top Cable Gainers," *Variety TV News*, September 24, 2011.

year's season finale "peaking at 5.6 million viewers."[219] As a result of this, the shows' "stars" quickly became tabloid fodder, consistently featured on glossy magazine covers in supermarket aisles across America. Despite the explicitly stated didactic aims of the executive producers, quoted above, there has been tremendous public scrutiny regarding the representations of teenage pregnancy in both the original series PDSM (2009-12, 5 seasons) and the more successful spin offs PDSM I (2009-12, 4 seasons), and PDSM II (2011-2012, 2 seasons, ongoing), and PDSM III (in production).[220]

The program set-up on paper resembles a traditional documentary. Specifically, PDSM follows pregnant teenagers through their pregnancies until just after they deliver their children, and PDSM I, II, & III work a longer arc, picking four girls from a season of PDSM to follow for at least several seasons through the early stages of childrearing. These developmental arcs are supported by a large media presence, from periodicals and online news sources, to blogs and other online venues for user-generated commentary.

PDSM and PDSM I, II, & III are in this sense not formal documentaries, closed in a particular form, as the classic PBS Burns type documentaries, or part of a more multiple-mediated documentary community event, such as Moore's work represented. Yet they are undeniably documentary based shows, part of the reality tv genre, a televised documentary/reality tv series for cable, set apart from the televised documentary long form for PBS, or the documentary for theatrical viewing, yet still very much part of the documentary genre. Nonetheless, such "reality tv" has not actually been positioned in

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[219] Donna Freydkin, "Oh baby! PDSM returns with more unwed woe; But are they really cautionary tales?" *USA Today*, July 5 2011.

[220] I worked as a camera operator on these series between 2010 and 2012, and due to my confidentiality agreement can not disclose the names of the programs – particularly as I use behind the scenes interviews with cast and crew members herein. While it is improbable this dissertation would cause a problem, I can not afford to chance, it as the penalties for breaching that contract are millions of dollars. I am calling the programs PDSM, for please don't sue me.

discussions of documentary as an emerging variant. The emergence of reality tv as a current phenomena is most often traced to the 1980s and 1990s, with shows like *Cops* (1989-2012, Malcolm Barbour and John Langley), *Survivor* (2000-2012, Charlie Parsons), and *Real World* (1992-2012, Mary-Ellis Bunim and Jonathan Murray), although its roots were undeniably laid in the PBS series *An American Family* (1973, Jacqueline Donnet).

For the present, it is enough to signal that there is a different evolution of documentary history, still rooted in the same history that begins with Grierson and Flaherty through the televised documentaries of the 1960s. In a real sense, such shows in their widest iterations are derivative of the reality-based hidden camera and game shows of that same era, and the decades that followed (most notably, the hugely successful international *Big Brother,* 2000-2012 in the US, developed by John de Mol and Robert Caplain - a series that started more as an exploration of living together in strained circumstances and evolved over the seasons ever more into a game show). Thus in various forms, reality TV constituted from the very first an interesting hybrid form of documentary and entertainment driven television, yet it has rarely been situated vis-à-vis the later evolutions of documentary that were discussed in the last chapter.

What we must acknowledge, however, is that reality television is constituted as a non-fiction genre with explicit roots in documentary, even if all shows that presently fall into the category do not instantly seem to have documentary value -- *The American Family* is no *The Osbournes* (2002-2005, Elizabeth Hirschhorn and Charlie Schulman), but there are undeniable continuities. Important for my argument is the ways that these shows both capitalize on and rapidly change the format for documentary representation,

particularly in light of new media that allows for streaming episodes online with ongoing real-time user generated commentary. Such online assets serve as feedback loops for both producers and cast members in various configurations, depending on the time relation of the filming and the broadcasting (quite different for *Survivor*, which is assembled largely *after* the on-site footage is gathered, or *Big Brother*, where the producers control cast access, than in more interactive situations like *Real World*, where cast members interact with the public). Importantly, these time relations are used not only to cut and shape the present seasons according to user feedback, but they can also affect subsequent seasons in production and/or post-production. Thus this second case study presents another concentrated example of how newer technologies are changing the genre's instrumentality and space(s) of representation, through documentary texts and publics that are interacting more rapidly and plurally than ever before.

This chapter will focus on the production cycles of such shows, to demonstrate how their production practices, including controversies in the two teen pregnancy shows, need to be accommodated in theories of documentary. Reality TV is, I believe, creating new norms for representation of and assumptions about documentary's objectivity and its subjects' agency that need to be factored into future discussions about instrumentality and subjectivity narratives.

Importantly, reality tv discourses emerge as incredibly limited forms of documentary expression, both in popular culture and academic discourse, but ones which will impact viewers' expectations about how documentaries are supposed to look. To make this case, I will first present a brief look into existing scholarship on the subject as well as the main tenets of its debate in public sphere to highlight the keys terms of the

controversy and scholarly inquiry. That will be followed by an explication of the production practices and conventions of the shows, to ask questions about objectivity, subjectivity narratives, and authorship. I believe this case will show how new technology is changing the conditions of production and representation in fundamental ways. Finally I will conclude on the areas of documentary studies and reality television that necessitate further scholarly inquiry.

Popular and Scholarly Discourses on Reality TV: The Case of PDSM

As reality shows become increasingly popular, their contents have generally been critiqued heavily in the media, with the shows' creators consistently accused of several things. In the case of PDSM, for example, media criticism was aimed chiefly at exploiting underage mothers and their children for profit and glorifying teenage pregnancy -- falsifying representations as profit-driven entertainment narratives rather than "public service."

Such critiques reveal the outmoded expectations about purportedly non-fictional representation in the public sphere that continue to privilege objectivity. These assumptions still align with the assumption of documentary as related to "non-biased" objective style of news reporting and direct cinema documentaries, and the critique is usually structured within the binary of entertainment driven narratives versus a Griersonian documentary instrumentality. These contentions are also mirrored in the existing body of scholarly literature on the subject, straightforwardly summarized here.

It is important to note that, despite the bourgeoning genre of reality tv, which has pervaded the programming of US cable networks, the inter-disciplinary conversation

among scholars is incredibly limited. One reason for this is that the phenomena of reality tv is relatively young and the current generation of reality programs has evolved rapidly in the last two decades, thereby dating scholarly publications on the topic very quickly after they are published. The existing body of scholarship has focused on attempts to classify and assign to typologies the various forms of reality TV,[221] debating its instrumentality,[222] the representation and performance of identity positions and politics,[223] debating the ethos of the genre's producers,[224] the culture of surveillance, as well as making claims about its objectivity in the context its larger association – all within or in opposition to what is theorized as the genre of documentary.[225] Importantly, the majority of the literature on reality tv is written about reality based game shows like *Survivor* and *Big Brother*, or about the culture of celebrity-based reality shows.[226] And as seen in the last chapter, there is a lack of scholarly voices that represent a practical

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[221] Lisa R. Godlewski and Elizabeth M. Perse, Audience Activity and Reality Television: Identification, Online Activity, and Satisfaction, *Communication Quarterly* Vol. 58, No 2 (April-June 2010), 149.

[222] John Corner, "Performing the Real, Documentary Diversions." Television and New Media 3 (2002): 255-69; Laurie Oullette and James Hay, *Better Living Through Reality TV: Television and Post Welfare Citizenship* (Malden: Blackwell, 2008); *Reality TV: The Civic Functions of Reality Entertainment*, Journal of Popular Film and Television, eds. Laurie Oullette and Susan Murray,, *Reality TV: Remaking Television Culture* (New York: NYU Press, 2004 and 2009, 2nd ed.). John Corner's seminal article on reality tv, *Performing the Real, Documentary Diversions,* argues that the genre has moved away from the initial pedagogical impulses of documentary to banal entertainment. Whereas media scholar Laurie Oullette, another prominent voice on reality tv, has argued in *Better Living Through Reality TV: Television and Post Welfare Citizenship* and *Reality TV: Civic Functions of Reality Entertainment*, that reality tv remains instrumental by creating an awareness of social issues through its subjects, positing the audiences as agents rather than passive consumers.

[223] Sujata Moortli and Karen Ross, "Reality Television: Fairy Tale or Feminist Nightmare?," *Feminist Media Studies* 4, No. 2 (2004), 203-205, this article presents a nice literature review of key scholarship reality tv in regards to the ways gender, race, and sexuality are represented and performed therein. Again we see feminists in the vanguard of discussion in the area of documentary.

[224] Representing the majority of opinions seen in Brian Winston, *Claiming the Real II, Documentary Grierson and Beyond* (London: British Film Institute, 2005), 261-8; Brian Winston, *Lies, Damn Lies, and Documentaries* (London: British Film Institute, 2000); Jack C. Ellis and Betsey McLane, *A New History of Documentary Film* (New York: Continuum, 2006), 333.

[225] See especially, Laurie Oullette and Susan Murray, eds., *Reality TV: Remaking Television Culture* New York: NYU Press, 2004 and 2009, 2nd ed.

[226] See among others, Dana Cloud, "The Irony Bribe and Reality Television: Investment and Detachment in the Bachelor," *Critical Studies in Media Communication,* Vol. 27, No. 5 (December 2010), 413-437.

knowledge of film/tv production, with the one major exception of a key work on reality tv, written by film scholars Richard Kilborn and John Izod, *An Introduction to Television Documentary, Confronting Reality* (2007).[227]

Nonetheless, most of those texts, as in popular public discourse assume that the subjects of reality tv are at best artificial avatars, dupes of the systems, who have no control over their own representations.[228] They also continue to marginalize the information streams surrounding subjectivity narratives in favor of their preferred discussions of objective/observational styles -- discussions that are in many ways outdated with the rise of reflexive filmmaking. While some scholarship does theorize reflexive filmmaking in interesting ways, such as the performance-based theories of Stella Bruzzi,[229] the subjects of documentary texts have not been positioned within those frameworks. In other words, scholarship as a whole has not caught up with the advances in technology that, however nascent, are already imperative to understanding documentary today, especially the feed-back loops made possible by real-time and asynchronous audience feedback that intervene in production and postproduction.

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[227] Richard Kilborn and John Izod, *An Introduction to Television Documentary: Confronting Reality* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1997). Despite its age, this is a particularly insightful text, although it whose work classifies television documentaries as "cultural artifacts," rather than the living dialectical space I am theorizing them here. The text is refreshing because the authors researched methods of production from documentary filmmakers in cinema and television, and also addresses the ways documentaries are crafted for specific audiences – although that is already assumed with television programs more generally. They also claim that aesthetics "imply rather than make arguments," which is antithetical to my case as well, that aesthetics are inherently representative of the filmmakers point of view. It also outdated in terms of its characterization of reality tv as reliant on recreations, and as comprised largely of crime and medical related subjects, as are its discussions on technology, even referencing CD-ROMS. It does a great job on relating how broadcasters regulate and limit televised documentaries, as well as discussing historical differences between televised and theatrical documentaries.

[228] Please see among others, Brian Winston, *Claiming the Real II: Documentary Grierson and Beyond* (London: British Film Institute, 2005), 261-8. Winston roots the genre in the vein of Rouche's cinema verite, which sought to illuminate truths through produced scenarios, yet positions subjects as exploited by the networks.

[229] Stella Bruzzi, *New Documentary: A Critical Introduction* (London: Routledge, 2000).

Popular media discourses also parallel these conceptual categories. For example, PDSM has been the subject of tremendous public scrutiny that condemns it as falling into infotainment -- for example, accusing its creators of glamorizing teenage pregnancy and exploiting its cast members.[230] Such criticism reveals how much the public believe in the media's ability to influence public opinion and action: the show has even been accused of starting a trend of teenagers attempting to get pregnant just to be in the show.[231] ABC's coverage of that debate quoted Dr. Logan Levkoff, whose perspective is indicative of the show's opposition: "We have our pregnant teens showing up on the cover of magazines, they're getting paid, they're getting endorsement deals and being calendar models, creating a culture that says its exciting to be a pregnant teen."[232] These ideas have taken up a significant amount of airtime in the past few years, particularly during incidents where members of the cast have faced legal and substance abuse problems -- situations that are echoed in the media coverage of other shows like *The Real World*, as well.

Such shows are often painted as *Hunger Games*, with charges leveled about the exploitation of its young disenfranchised cast members, positioning them as victims of a devious producers who are manipulating scenarios to create dramatic narratives, both on set and in the edit. In an interview with *American Conservative*, Fail Dines, professor at Whelock College, said, "These are young vulnerable women who have an incredibly difficult job raising children alone. PDSM is minimizing it, romanticizing and turning

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230 For a thorough summary of that controversy please see, among others, Arienne Thompson, PDSM: their stars' celeb status, run risk of glamorizing teen motherhood, USA TODAY, November 23, 2010; Jan Hoffman, "Fighting Teenage Pregnancy With PDSM Stars as Exhibit A," *The New York Times,* April 10, 2011, Style, 1.

231 JuJu Chang and Jessica Hopper, "Pregnancy Pressure: Is PDSM Encouraging Pregnancy for Fame?, ABC News, February 11, 2011.

232 Ibid.

them into freaks to follow."[233] Such comments reflect the assumption of a top down power structure assumed in the authorship of reality televisions as whole, where the producers and crew are positioned as having complete control over the "truths" of the documentary representations. Both sets of remarks reflect assumptions about objectivity in reality television, as well as about how those "truths" or mistruths are produced and represented

Such critiques in both popular and scholarly discourse can be straightforwardly understood as reflecting expectations about documentary's representative space and about how older documentaries privilege objectivity, while marginalizing subjective narratives. As seen previously in Moore's case, this perspective does not provide for newer voices and speaking positions opened in documentary that emerged with reflexive filmmaking. The next section will highlight how subjectivity and new media are now critical components to the authorship of the new documentary text, and how reality tv has begun to codify these positions in new ways -- especially in mutual negotiations between producers and subjects rather than being producers' fictions alone.

Objectivity and the Making of Reality TV: Production Aesthetics

From the time of its inception PDSM show has presented itself in the form of documentary programming. Its press interviews, its visual conventions and production practices, as well as its aesthetics, all work together to make it appear "live," related to documentary and news style reporting. We will address those practices below in more detail as part of the larger struggle of power between the network and the subjects. Yet

[233] Kellsey Beaucar Valcos, "Born to Consume," *American Conservative*, July 2011, 24.

the locus of the story's truth is actually being produced in two places, in the hands of the production staff and crew, as well as in the hands of the less often theorized characters in the series. By looking at the power systems that govern the production of the show and the technologies that inform it, this section will show how televised documentary is not the same beast it is conceived to be in the public sphere, and how consciously extends the paradigm of a documentary space rather than a documentary form already encountered in the case of Michael Moore.

The first difference between the two production sequences creates two different power centers for production. When Moore was in production for *Fahrenheit 9/11* he only needed to report occasionally to his executive producers with samples of his work,[234] whereas in the case of many reality shows, the executive producers are intensely involved in day to day production. In the case of a shows like PDSM, the show's homebase is in New York City, and its offices house the executive producers, post-production edit, line producer who manages all of production, production managers (who deal with setting up shoots, security locations, organizing travel, and fielding emergency issues), and financial officers.[235] Whereas for Moore, he had has own production company that oversaw the production practices, he was simply responsible to check in with sources of its funding in regard to his progress during his production schedule. In contrast, a network production office will have access to more kinds of data and will be able to exercise more kinds of pressure in the serial show as it develops. In addition, because the new generation of reality show often features controversial subjects or dangerous locations (and, in the case of PDSM, the majority of principle cast are minors),

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[234] Matt Lauer, *Moore Defends Incendiary Film*, Dateline NBC, 6/18/2004.
[235] Common knowledge in production.

legal and executive producers stay closely involved with the practices and stories pursued in the field. Moore was in exclusive control of these decisions, and he had time to control demands from his sponsors, where the typical reality show does not. In this sense, the kinds of demands made on Ken Burns by his network have become more insistent, urgent, and present in the production of his documentary.

A second difference in logistics also changes the power dynamics of this production: the question of an observational style, which uses a camera that "observes" what is going on, supposedly neutrally. Both Moore and many reality shows like PDSM use a non-observational model for their documentaries, where the camera does not take on that appearance of a neutral role -- Moore's preferred mode. Yet reality shows often make certain moves to align themselves explicitly with observational styles of documentary, such as those associated with news reporting and hailed by practitioners of direct cinema. As we have already addressed in part, such different camera practices may not actually establish anything but a neutral space, as can be seen in how reality show production crews often operate in the field. Where direct cinema filmmakers argued for the least obtrusive methods of capturing a story, the typical documentary film crew is very overt: each crew that goes out into the field minimally consists of two camera operators, one assistant camera person (AC), one sound operator, one director, one production manager (PM), one production assistant (PA), and at least one security guard.[236] If a production is having difficulties creating the narrative, they will often send

[236] The use of mandatory security guards is usually imposed once a show begins airing and its popularity widespread, making it difficult to retain anonymity in subsequent filmings. Security can be required, for example, for the talent and crew in the event a scene becomes violent – the point in which the security guard is actually called in is an interesting ethical question, if the director and producer must make a call to protect themselves legally, while also getting the "story." (In one season of *Big Brother*, for example a houseguest purportedly pulled a knife on another one and had to be removed from the set.)

a story producer into the field as well, who normally works as a go between post-production, executive producers, and the director to oversee the ongoing writing of the show's narrative. If the subjects of the show become particularly difficult or difficult material emerges, an executive producer may fly out to negotiate the situation directly. This kind of intervention in the cause of serving the narrative arc of the material is precisely the model direct cinema documentary filmmakers despised because it is incredibly disruptive and obtrusive to the natural space of profilmic action. Particularly if the subjects of the reality show are low income and live in modest houses/apartments (e.g. as happens in *Extreme Makeover* or *Wife Swap*), the sizeable crew quickly fills up small spaces with bodies and gear.

The inner workings of the (necessary) crew set up for an ongoing, multi-season show defies the "observational" model of documentary filmmaking in other ways. Everyone on the crew is connected by "walkies" or walkie talkies, allowing for the crew to communicate with one another without the subjects hearing what is said – allowing for direction and blocking as well as ongoing commentary on what's happening in any given scene in ways that may help shape the story arc in terms of what film can be caught. In addition, the cameras are attached to transmitters that send a wireless signal wirelessly to the director's monitor, as well as to a second monitor for the auxiliary production team, who are generally stationed remotely in a van just outside of the shooting location. Thus the director and producers need not be in the room to make calls to the shooter that tell them what to shoot, from what angle, and what framing to follow. Thus the decisions of how things are shot are governed locally *by the production team*, first by the camera operator, and secondly by the director/producer, and these decisions may well override

any "natural" story arc that might be in the material. Often the director will ask the operators to prompt the subjects to do various things, talk about certain subjects, and/or repeat actions for the camera, conflating interviews with archival footage in other ways. There is a practical consequence, as well: this setup also allows the camera operators to split up and cover more ground, capturing footage in more than one location, as the director can watch both cameras on their monitors.

It is no secret that much of reality tv content is produced, a situation which requires the director to mediate between the requests of the production crew back in the home production office (New York or LA, usually) and the subjects, structuring interactions that occur primarily through "pick ups" and setup scenes where subjects engage conversations relevant to the story.[237] "Pick ups" are coverage for holes in the story that are identified during post-production, moments in the subjects lives that were not captured on video, and which are required to tell the story in a cohesive manner. That is, such reality shows are not constrained by what can be found, as a documentary is, they can manufacture missing parts of the script as they found it in the first set of narratives filmed.

Remember that production of such a show is always shooting at least one season ahead of its scheduled airdate, so that, while the crews are filming one season, the prior season is being edited (maybe as broadcast is going on, for multi-part shows). Thus when a director is told by the production office that his crew needs to film a "pick up," the subjects are asked to recreate those moments that have been identified in post-production as missing from the stories' narrative. Or perhaps the story emerges as having

[237] The shooting day is generally comprised 80% of staged scenes and 20% what they call "verité" of the profilmic action. This is a generous estimate towards the side of "verite," the vast majority of these scenes are set up conversations and pickups of various scenes post needs for their edit.

taken a different trajectory than assumed during its initial capture, in which case the editing team may need narrative bridges for cohesion. Because of the time situation, or if there is a hole in the story that was not documented on film, the subjects of the reality show are asked to do "pickups" where they must reenact scenes that happened as much as six months to a year prior to when they are filmed. Importantly, such supplements often require a crew to "cheat the camera," if subjects have changed their hair color or length, hats were worn, etc. In the case of a show like PDSM 1, for instance, the crews need to work around the fact that its subjects may had given birth between the two shoots, which might require the kind of shooting tricks often used in entertainment cinema or TV: clever placement of pillows, bags, or couch cushions could be used to give the impression the subject was still pregnant. Finally, pickup scenes in reality shows might feature phone calls and text messages, only instead of the original subject, the pickup would have the director on the other end of the phone communicating with the talent, giving dialogue prompts, in place of the person who participated in the actual event the "pickup" is intended to supplement.

The second produced practice in this kind of reality show operates more in the vein of news production: viewers of almost any reality scenario, game or documentary, will be familiar with interpolated conversation scenes which show the talent in a sit-down dialogue with other characters on the show or speaking directly to the camera (and probably to the director) in order to address the topics of the story's narrative as a more mediated sequence, often commenting on or supplementing the original footage. To get such footage, the director will begin by briefing the crew and the subjects independently about the purpose of the scene/interview/discussion prior to bringing in the full crew for

the shoot. During filming, the director is either in close proximity to the subjects on screen, if not just around the corner watching and listening through wireless transmission. This allows them to direct over "walkie" and also step back into the room to engage the subjects directly. This direction generally consists of conversation prompts about which the subject might want to comment or discuss – the "story beats" outlined by the producers. At times, such interventions might include more explicit moments of feeding lines or ideas to the characters (a tactic probably most familiar from the tribal council sequences of *Big Brother*, where the on-air producer/talent asks leading questions). Interestingly, the prompts directors give to characters in contentious situations may be aimed at escalating the situation for dramatic purposes and exciting footage -- they can even result in actual fights, which can escalate very rapidly and continue long after the cameras have left the set.

Such examples, however, do not necessarily set this filmmaking apart from the history of documentary and its theorists. Many critiques of reality tv level such moments in production by declaring them to be inauthentic practices of documentary. However, they are very much rooted in the first era of documentary's use of non-professional actors, reenactments like those in *Nanook*, and Rouche's version of cinéma vérité.[238] Rouche practiced a form of cinéma vérité where he defended producing scenarios for subjects, believing it did not inauthenticate the response of the subject to camera -- the presence of the subjects, not the filmmaking apparatus, made the result authentic.

Moreover, for our point here, Rouche's assumption leads to another theoretical point that emerges as particularly significant in a production situation like that of the

[238] Brian Winston, *Claiming the Real II, Documentary Grierson and Beyond* (London: British Film Institute, 2005), 261-8. Winston highlights documentary filmmaker Jean Rouche's cinéma vérité, which similarly sought to illuminate truths through produced scenarios.

reality show: retakes and pickups do not only allow the production crew to steer the narrative, they also allow the subjects to rewrite their own reactions to certain situations. To be sure, they can never completely rewrite those reactions, but certainly they were able to emphasize certain emotions or thoughts over others, in a more clear way than they may have been able to articulate when it initially happened. This revisionism falls outside some documentary theories. For example, pickups can also be among the biggest issues of contention for subjects of reality tv, particularly new subjects, who are resistant to doing things "unnaturally" on camera, and so can oppose the director who must find resolution that caters to the talent but assuages the story producers at homebase.[239] Thus both pick ups and staged dialogue scenes are not only foregrounded in the historical practices of documentary, but moreover their use in reality tv brings the two genres close, in that they allow subjects to participate in the creation of their own representation, through negotiations with the director.

At this point, the production of documentary "reality" in such tv shows converges with problems in documentary theory, and the question of the document being a product of an interaction in a more public space comes to the fore, and several origin points for narrative converge. Importantly, the director does not only need to mediate between their subjects and the requests from homebase, but also accommodate their own sense of ethics and ideology, as well -- the director has particular agency when there is no script set in advance. The director always has a vision for the story that changes as rapidly as the

[239] I have heard several reports where directors asked talent to recreate scenes that they did not wish to. In many situations, production had to be shut down while the director tried to convince them to participate. In some cases, the director prevailed; in others, the missing scene was covered through a produced conversation that would narrate the scene that could not be shown. Apparently in some of these cases, the executive producers who signed less willing talent onto the show by telling them they would not have to do anything they were not comfortable with, that show was shot in an observational format, and did not stress the need to occasionally "act" out anything. This can make the director's job particularly hard, especially when in practice they often need to recreate scenes to better match the story arc of the production.

events in the subject's life, often shifting dramatically within minutes as a story unfolds. Yet that voice is constrained by a vision of the public who will consume the project: directors are in constant communication in with executive producers and story producers who establish the daily "story beats,"[240] as well as setting (even inventing) requirements for how certain situations must be addressed on camera. As a result of these constraints, directors find ways to achieve their own goals, sometimes in tacit ways.

For example, directors may introduce their own "story beats" into the day's agenda (ones that were not created with consent or in agreement with the story producers at homebase). One recurring one in PDSM2 turned up on screen: a subject was shot repeatedly when she attended her in college classes, because the director wanted to emphasize the importance and possibility of young mothers pursuing their educational goals. In addition, the young mothers are shown in gynecologists' offices, getting post-pregnancy birth control, with a physician shown on camera who was willing to be filmed explaining in depth the various birth control options available to her, thus educating the public as well. In a less explicit maneuver, the production featured organic cleaning products, unfamiliar to the talent, and then staged a conversation about them as she began cleaning her apartment. A follow-up conversation had the boyfriend also discussing the cleaning product, to educate the public about why that was an important consumer choice, particularly with a young child in the house.

Another example reportedly occurred on a whim during a shoot where a camera operator who is a vegan activist worked with the director to find a vegan bakery, and arranged for the subjects to have a discussion there, thereby hitting the mandatory "story

[240] Story beats are the basic story blocking units of the show's narrative, they are created by the director and story producers, sometimes editors, that govern the basic topics and actions that need to be addressed in each scene.

beats" (learning how to take care of a new family), while also discussing what "vegan" food was to educate the public on those issues. In fact, it is a commonly reported practice that the director brainstorms about the story on meal breaks and after work, as a traveling crew works closely together and with subjects across a long stretch of time. In this sense, the director and crew members can find ways to address their own political views within the larger narrative of the show, defying (or at least modifying) the kind of top down production model generally associated with reality tv. That is, the purported dominance of the homebase home office cannot control every aspect of scripting, even if story points are heavily imposed on the production crew. If a story needs to show healthy eating, it is the production team that ultimately defines "healthy" and the director who has to label the sequence as meeting the plot point and argue for its conclusion.

This facet of production hides what a documentary filmmaker like Michael Moore highlights: his own agency in making the topic's plot emerge. The homebase production team is very conscious that it is billed as "reality TV," meaning that the public needs to view the show as authentic. Sometimes that authenticity is so critical that a production unit will actively attempt to conceal the methods explicated above from public view. One example reported to me told of an order coming down from the executive producers dictating that no written communication associated with the production in any way could include the word "pickups" or "restaging," even written communication between show employees – those scenes were simply to be marked by an "*".

The actual production setup of many of these shows also reflects this desire to hide what Moore highlights. Often, the title of directors is changed to producers, assuming that this title makes them sound less involved with mediating ("directing") the

content that was being recorded ("produced"). This decision has various physical/visual manifestations, as well, such as when a director's walkie was then labeled, "producer" -- not for the crew, but as an important guise when shooting in public locations, so that the role of the director here could not be associated with the role of a director in narrative films. The public knows directors necessarily work with actors/actresses to coach them on the content and emotional quality of their performance, while producers simply work with the whole production in often unspecified ways. Yet in practice the onset director functions as the creator, being very much responsible for ensuring the emotions of the character are consistent with the story, guaranteeing consistency of character and representation, and helping "get the talent into character." In one reported instance, one of the subjects could not get into character and production stopped down so that talent could listen to a song to get her in the right mood for the scene.[241]

The show is not only trying to maintain the appearance of observational style documentary and news reporting in the above mentioned practices but also in their aesthetic practices as well. To achieve the look of documentary, the typical reality show is shot in an unprepared or semi-prepared location (not the game shows like *Survivor*, which have more difficulty doing retakes) utilizing all handheld camera work. This preference comes out of the historical practice in direct cinema of using handheld cameras. In addition, the cameras on PDSM are front heavy (as opposed to shoulder mounted camera that are balanced) and so the weight pulls the camera forward instead of centering it on the operator's body, creating additional shake on the camera. As a result many experienced operators on the typical set bring their own rigs to help manage the

[241] Interestingly, an LA based sound guys who worked on a reality show and on features told me this was a popular technique in Hollywood, revealing that he often saw Johnny Depp and other actors wearing a headphone while shooting to play emotionally relevant music to get him into the scene.

weight and create smoother movements and steadier pictures. Yet they report that editors will often cut a scene in post using the shakiest moments they can find, particularly for cutaways (where a subject is not speaking, footage that can be pulled from any moment in a scene and used anywhere as a reaction shot, i.e. a subject listening to someone who is speaking). This situation is compounded by the executive producers' choice in PDSM to use a standard definition camera – the Panasonic DVX – a particularly unusual choice for a television world that is broadcast in HD.[242] These cameras are old and often very beat up, creating addition forms of distortion to the image, as does the use of the camera's native SD format which is less clean that native HD, and must be altered in a post house to meet HD broadcast specs.

Here, then, is a set of choices that also create a consistent narrative for a show and which manipulate both the crew's space of expression and the audience's expectation. In all cases, a show's shooting style is governed by a "show bible" and sample dvd (I have seen several for my various jobs as shooter). This rigid control of the shooting environment ensures several things. First, it levels out the individuality of the sizeable group of camera operators who generally work on such a show.[243] The camera operators have a huge diversity in their backgrounds. Some will have narrative experience – even AFI graduates – and others with documentary feature films, while still others may come

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[242] It is also more expensive, as it requires the crew to shoot to tape stock which is expensive in comparison to HD footage where you simply buy cards that are reused - shot, dumped, cleaned, and used again. There is also a huge expense involved in "up-ressing" the footage so it will be usable in HD formats. Despite consistent demands on one show of frustrated crews that want to shoot on HD, the executives would not change formats. This stylistic choices shows a degraded image more closely aligned with the raw imagery of news reporting and lower aesthetic standards of documentary in general.

[243] For example in *The Real World*, there are 52 camera operators credited (http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0103520/fullcredits#cast), *Big Brother* credits 73 camera operators (http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0251497/fullcredits#cast), *Survivor* credits 106 camera operators (http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0239195/fullcredits#cast), while even a live show like *Saturday Night Live* includes only 20 (http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0072562/fullcredits#cast).

from news, public affairs, and even advertising. Thus a show's bible and sample DVD ensures continuity between shooting styles in ways that bring their production in line with the conventions of televised documentary. For example, framing conventions differ in television and narrative cinema: close ups in a filmic style might zoom into to a character's eyes and mouth for special effects, whereas a close up for television almost always wants to see the majority of the person's head. That is, cinematic conventions allow for greater abstractions and artistic interpretations, which is oppositional to the style of news reporting that the typical reality show wants to align itself with -- the palette of acceptable shots are more characteristic of news rather than narrative cinema, in a second attempt (beyond the handheld camera) to accentuate the feeling that the heavily produced reality footage was shot "live" and shows what really is happening.

Another important practice of some reality shows is the use of voice over narration to create the narrative arc for the show (others will use text titles with time, date, and location stamps to fill the same function). In the case of PDSM, this narration is done by the female lead of the show at the very end of the post-production process, often months after all of the principle shooting for the show is finished and after the story has been solidified in post-production. This is not the "voice of god" narration used in previous era's of documentary filmmaking, or the reporter telling the audience what is true. Instead, it is clearly the voice of the subject of the show, which again reinforces the aura of authenticity around the events in the story. However, these lines are all written by the story producers who help supervise the edit in post production. I have not been able to find sources that report on negations between subjects and producers that may or may

not happen there, but they may happen to help an individual sound more "in character" once the lines are rehearsed.

The final aesthetic consideration that binds reality tv to documentary theory is the lighting on set, which appears to adhere to the natural light based shooting of direct cinema, but which in practice is not. The crews are sent out with the direction to use existing light to shoot the scenes, and their gear package does not include the standard light kits. Although a few light panels are usually included for emergency situations, they are used sparingly. Using natural light is synonymous with a "run and gun" documentary style often used in breaking news film, which increases the appearance of "liveness,"[244] as well as in the direct cinema area. The assumption behind the use of natural light is that the viewer will find greater authenticity in scenes that are not being lit prior to shooting. Clearly, set lighting is a critical component to narrative cinematography (documentary uses it too, but not on the same scale as studio shooting -- it is generally more clandestine). Yet even in reality TV, that convention is artifice: in practice, shooters will enter a shooting location, and their first task, if time allows, is to access the natural lighting, by turning on or off lights as necessary, opening or closing window shades, and adjusting the positions of the subjects when they are able and competent to do so. Importantly, it is a common practice for the production managers and assistants to purchase lighting for subjects' homes that are too dark. This allows for an appearance of documentary style shooting in footage that is in fact manipulated by the crew.

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[244] For a discussion that theorizes "liveness" in televised documentary please see, Mark Williams, *History in a Flash: Notes on the Myth of TV Liveness,* in Jane M. Gaines and Michael Renov, *Collecting Visible Evidence* (Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press, 1999), 292-311. Therein he problematizes the assumptions of liveness in televised documentary, which he identifies as rooted in the studio based documentaries in the 1960s, but which continued to extend even to include prerecorded content.

These examples suggest that reality tv needs to be considered in relation not only to narrative cinema (as a "fiction") but also with respect to the conventions of various historically documented and theorized forms of documentary (from those with voice of god voiceovers or camera perspectives, through cinéma vérité and direct documentary). Most particularly, what reality tv does rests on a continuity with work like Michael Moore's, with a very conscious production ethic, almost that of narrative cinema, just as it does with the purportedly more objective news documentary. Critically, it also highlights the need to move to the documentary *event* as the unit of analysis, rather than to the director as author (who is consciously effaced or renamed in some reality tv) or to the purported neutrality of the objective camera.

What emerges most clearly in a production analysis of many variants of reality tv is how all parties involved -- director, production, home office, and talent -- remain in constant, iterative dialogue about the images being collected for the final documentary project. This is in one sense easier because reality TV runs over many episodes or even seasons, giving ample time for feedback loops to set in -- for the reality show to be the on-going product of a discussion between various parties jostling for control of the meanings shown to their eventual audiences. But another key assumption of documentary theory, that the subjects in any version of the documentary have little control over their messages and pubic personae, is also challenged by this analogy between documentary space and reality tv space -- a project to which we now turn.

Subjectivity and Reality TV: Talent and the Agency of Screen Personae

The other large issue for documentary theory has always been the status and agency of documentary subjects, especially those whose stories might be "stolen." But this question is amplified when the idea that a reality show has a script or story-board of sorts that gets strictly upheld. The concept of marrying fiction and non-fiction film techniques dates as far back to the era of Greirson and Flaherty, yet in the post-direct cinema era, the public gets into an uproar if they believe scenarios are produced, questioning the authenticity of the content. And the talent in the shows may also have reservations, as the case adduced in my discussion of pickups above suggests. Clearly, the network also chooses to make it a major issue as they go to great lengths, described above, to internally mask any manipulations on set and within production. However, as suggested in the previous section (maintaining the appearance of) objectivity is not the only point of concern for producers. Instead, the reality of the show depends on authenticity of the subjects -- in the case of PDSM, the stories of the girls involved, and of their ability to claim their own narrative agency, so that they are not pawns in their televised representation. We have indeed seen ways in which reality tv subjects can help co-author their representations in pickups and facilitated conversation scenes. But the dimensions of authorship reach even further, as we will now assess.

A huge dimension of authorship emerges in reality television over the time arcs of production, public popularity and input, and multiple seasons. In the case of the girls featured on PDSM 1, 2, and 3 are essentially graduates of PDSM, picked by producers to continue on the recurring series of PDSMs. And this choice begins to open up a field of agency for participants. The original series PDSM more closely resembles long form documentaries for TV, with one-hour episodes dedicated exclusively to each girl's

pregnancy and birth. Yet PDSM 1, 2, and 3 change the type of its narrative format, instead following four girls over the course of several seasons, with each subject featured in several segments throughout the show, each broken up by commercial breaks. Each episode thus is constructed quite differently than those in the first season, with each subject seeing much less screen time in each episode than they had had in their earlier hour long show. What's particularly interesting is the transformations that occur as the subjects "graduate" from PDSM to PDSMs, revealing an interesting shift how they deal with production, and the larger questions of agency.[245]

Clearly, the "stars" of reality TV experience changes in their quality of life. Once they are established on a program. This can be seen in the public sphere as they catapult into tabloid fodder, reaching *nuevo* "celebrity" status, as they are commonly featured on talk shows, on the front page of popular magazines, blogs, and are stalked/harassed by paparazzi (even friends and family members report being sought out as well). Locally, they are even more famous: everyone in their hometown knows who they are, people stop to ask for photographs and autographs.[246] Where Moore's style of reflexivity would makes these sorts of things transparent in the show's narrative, reality shows are at pains to minimize such hassles for cast and crew; game show variants often orchestrate "visits home" to tap into such popularity. Nonetheless, the show participants understand that they have been given a kind of public platform to exert their own agency and political/social agendas. They reportedly also begin to recognize and wield a greater

[245] The same issues occur in all types of reality tv, including game shows. *Big Brother*, for example, has constructed several seasons using returning "houseguests," usually those who had found compelling images in earlier seasons and who are willing to push those personae further.

[246] Reports from participants indicate that, for example, when one reality celebrity mom went to take her son to the emergency room when he had an incredibly high fever, and people in the ER were stopping her to ask for her picture. Many of the moms have used this to their financial advantage, leveraging their celebrity into profit making endeavors like Sentsy, among others. Sentsy is a scented candle company, which subjects of PDSM 1,2, and 3 have used to create signature scented products. http://scentsy.net/

sense of their own power in relation to production, taking more liberties, and making more demands.

When the subjects sign contracts for seasons past the initial one, they begin to understand their inherent value to the network - particularly in the significant increase of their paycheck. In a low-end production in early seasons, they may be given as little as $2000 for their participation.[247] If they stay on for later seasons, such stars of multi-season are given what has been rumored to vary between 60-100k per season, not including whatever else they may make in media exposure.[248] Some participants have been critiqued for spending the money on cosmetic surgery,[249] which can also afford them a better quality of life than they would have had otherwise – getting participants "camera ready" for spin offs and endorsement deals. Some can open businesses or enroll in college.[250] In addition, the network purportedly provides a trust fund for each child on the PDSM series, that the parents cannot touch – as an investment in the child's future.

Crew members from reality shows generally agree that, after an initial season, participant subjects become more active in their self-fashioning, as they watch all the episodes preceding their own on DVDs -- an exposure that works for talent like the "show bible" and samples given to the crew-members when they are signed on. However, in the case of the subjects, it is a voluntary induction to the show's conventions. Crew members who I have spoken to about this maintain that talent regularly begin to

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[247] Salaries are not released publicly, this figure is based on what I was told by several cast-members on various locations while shooting various shows.

[248] One of the original cast members reported that she made $140,000 for one season of the show. As reported by Sun Feifei "Teen Moms are Reality TV's new stars. Is This A Good Thing?" *Time Magazine*, Vol. 178, Issue 3 July 10, 2011, 58. It was speculated among crewmembers that worked on the show, that the original cast members were the most popular, receiving the highest compensation from the network.

[249] Please see for example, *In Touch Weekly*'s cover story, titled "Teen Moms Addicted to Surgery," April 11, 2011.

[250] Personal communication from Donna Freydkin, "Oh Baby," 2D, who was at the end of her college program when interviewed.

discuss or act out the scripts and behaviors they have seen during on past seasons, perpetuating the kinds of dramas played out on the show season after season. Talent, for example, can express opinions about prior participants, resolving, for example, to not repeat certain less than exemplary behaviors girls from other seasons had enacted. A subject on the show whom I will call Shannon, for example, wanted the American public to know she could be a teenage mother, work, and go to school, that however difficult it would not inhibit her future goals. Shannon also wanted to convey the importance of healthy relationships and would chastise her boyfriend on camera around the issues she saw as problematic to most girls her age – including beauty/body images, among others. Subjects like Shannon might be given the chance to work with directors to request such topics be documented on camera, but they also will simply edit themselves in their speech to reflect that agenda, thereby co-authoring the story's narrative.

Another non-traditional role reflecting the agency of documentary subjects in such shows also occurs in this transition is result of the subjects becoming accustomed to the presence of the production crew, as it is no longer a novelty, and they begin to work in rhythm with crew. They become familiar with the marks they need to hit – such as when they need to stop and wait for crew, that they need to redo entrances and exits –, that they need to repeat the director's questions as their own, and how to adjust their own microphones, among others. The talent will often "slate" for the camera, starting the filming of a segment when they are ready, which also illustrates the ways they become part of the production crew itself. In addition, seasoned cast members know what angles they need to be shot from or how to position themselves in front of the camera to make themselves look good (ie if you slouch on the couch you will have a double chin). These

practices are contrary to the assumptions made by direct cinema practitioners who wanted to minimize the conspicuousness of the tools of production, and who maintained you should never ask a subject to do something twice. Yet repeating an action is a common practice on reality shows, and talent learns to integrate it into part of their routine – experienced cast, for example, will often coach newbies, behaving like new friends, etc – thus replacing the director in stage direction, among others.[251]

Additionally, the subjects become used to having the same community of crew members around them, and traditional barriers between camera/sound departments and talent become much more flexible, as demonstrated in varying degrees of camaraderie between them. The kind of camaraderie that results can include crewmembers befriending subjects through social media sites, which breaches the standard ethical guidelines upheld by news journalists. Yet it also brings the cast and crew together more closely, and puts more "eyes" on the current happenings of the talent, where participants occasionally flag interesting materials for the production crew.

In addition, working with the same talent over time informs crew members about certain patterns related to each of their subjects, familiarizes them with the various domestic spaces – or sets - that they work on, and can help them predict their own movements in anticipation of the subjects, among others. This is particularly beneficial situation for the camera and sound operators in reality shows that filmed in natural locations, not sets. These operators are in a constant "dance" between themselves and the subjects to maintain the "axis line" that governs all multi-camera shoots, generally in

[251] Interestingly, the 2012 summer season of *Big Brother* has introduced returning all-star players into the game as coaches for the inexperienced players -- an interesting way of gaining control over players who increasingly have virtually full knowledge of prior seasons. This again suggests that reality game shows need to be considered alongside reality documentary shows, filling in that space between fact and fiction. It is also a narrative thread in the *Hunger Games*, seen in Woody Harrelson's character.

small spaces. Such interpersonal connections also aid in assuaging certain temperament issues of various subjects – who might want to be treated as "the star." The crew comes to understand how to pacify their moods, and/or how they like things to be done, giving the talent an illusion of control.

Not surprisingly, in the typical reality show shoot, the talent begin to realize their value to the network, and they begin to become less compliant with the demands of production, with certain subjects regularly holding up production crews by various ploys. As a typical example, one time a subject did not feel like shooting the scene she was instructed to shoot by her director. The crew was planning to meet up with her when they finished their lunch break, and when she was finished with class. The director could not get a hold of her, and the crew was stopped down waiting to hear what plan B would be. She later claimed her cell phone had died. Reportedly, this was not an isolated incident but a common action of subjects, who are not limited to being in any one place. They can also be prone to walk off set, not show up, and not return calls. As a result, crews on the show notoriously spend massive amounts of time just sitting in the crew van, like the soldier of *Jarhead*, ready to shoot but with no target. In certain situations, key talent may be given incentives to participate, through meals or gas. In more serious situations, an executive producer may fly down to try to negotiate with certain characters, often offering cash bonuses.

And this exchange of power positions becomes critical in understanding how what might seem to be a closed space of representation actually ends up being very related to the public sphere in its production as well as in its consumption. Even in a show like PDSM, geared towards educational purposes, there is clearly still much at stake

financially for the executive producers, and as talent begins to understand this, they actively begin to negotiate the conditions of their labor and representation. While some of this resistance does have to do with the more superficial end of celebrity demands - “diva complex” --, it is important that it is also signals an act of resistance that turns the subject of a reality space into an agent. The examples above suggest some of the ways the subjects are challenging the ways production is treating their story – what parts of their story they want to be represented – in a constant negotiation that preserves their authenticity, as opposed to a top down authoritarian structure.

These sorts of negotiations between cast and crew can escalate. In a famous example from the first season of *Big Brother*, the houseguests refused to comply with a directive from the voice-of-god in the house, completely derailing a planned "competition" that they felt was mean-spirited. In documentary style reality shows, there have been reported cases when talent began to use their power collectively to change the conditions of production. Again this was reenacted in *Hunger Games.*

If talent refuses to participate, a set has to be shut down, with the crew waiting. This is a clear breach of contract by the talent, who incur significant financial penalties, purportedly to offset the money it costs to transport and house crew members, rent gear, and pay crew dayrates, whether they have gotten any footage or not. There are industry rumors about head production managers in shock because sets had been shut down with talent refusing to shoot at all a particular week. Such very significant events are not documented in trade papers, most likely because if casts of talent pull together and make demands of the network, they can ultimately unionize, in practice if not in reality -- hiring a lawyer and an agent to represent them as a unified group. That this documentation is

lacking is not surprising given the heavy contract penalties (massive fines) for cast and crew if they are caught leaking any information about the show to the press. Such details are addressed in many mandatory telephone conference meeting between the large number of people who work on the show in various capacities – sometimes, the only times mandatory meetings were set up that include all phases of a production together.

Thus new kind of agency in documentary emerges in the space of reality tv, not only in the working conditions of the subjects and in their telling of their own stories, but also in their individual decisions to use their positions for advocacy -- a realization that the talent has become a significant public voice. Thus one of reality star revealed that on shoot days she always wears articles of clothing and personal accessories from the "Red" campaign, designed to support awareness about AIDS. She explained her connection to the cause was the result of losing a close family member to the illness, and while she did not want to disclose this private information on camera, she consistently attempted to signify the personal impact of her loss through her choice of wardrobe. A show's subjects can also engage advocacy outside of the show, which we will return to later.

The examples here have shows that scholars undervalue the play of agency within the production of reality tv discourses. Too many scholars assume that the subjects are merely acting out the scripts of production, where they are in fact participating in the creation of their own stories – helping to shape their representation in various ways, albeit not always in situations where they are in complete control. This is also true for the crew who participate in their own ways to create aspects of the story – as evidenced by the example with the vegan bakery, as well as shape it through representing their point of view through the rhetorical choices of the camera lens, among others. While the

production sets up scenarios and conventions that does not fictionalize the entire story, but rather, the crew and the subjects navigate their own agency within those parameters to give authenticity of their voice to the story as it unfolds. And the documentary thus again becomes an event, a negotiation among many parties creating a local documentary space with a legitimate reality claim on the audience (who can talk-back every time they meet the participants on the street, add to a blog, and the like).

There are important parallels here to Moore's case that amplify the relations of power and agency that crystallize in a documentary that reflects interactions of many parties, not just of individual. Moore did have to answer to his distributors in the final hour, but he was also given autonomy in terms of what happened in the field and how the film was shot. As a result, the agency and power relations within that documentary situation are explicitly entwined around him. On the one hand, he could be as bold and brazen as he wanted in his reflexive film techniques that made the apparatus of production transparent to viewers, inverting the conventions of documentary both in content and aesthetics. On the other, his onscreen persona was gauged to engage his audiences in particular ways, and thus in part scripted by their expectations. The subjects of reality shows like PDSM maintain the same kind of self-awareness of their speaking positions and audience reactions to those positions, but without explicit control over the methods of production. Unlike Moore, they must find more tacit ways of telling their own stories, even if it is through a private agreement made between the director and themselves. Yet at the same time, they are in absolute control of the documentary situation as talent: there is no documentary without them, unlike cinema documentaries which utilize archival documentation (newsreels, prior interviews, photos, etc.). Moore's

two agent positions -- as director and as talent -- can thus become separated in a reality show production context. It is no accident that some shows rename the director the producer, which is not only an attempt at covering up power relations, but also an accurate description of that person's shift from creator of a vision to chief negotiator of a documentary situation.

The last component in this second version of a new documentary situation lies in the relationship between new media technology, and what must now be considered the documentary space or event, not the documentary film object. One of the executive producers of PDSM was interviewed by *USA Today* (2010), and he characterizes the show's success, as well as its problems, as being "driven by a completely different industry. The modern cultural-Twitter-online-viral monster."[252] What is significant here is power the producer is ascribing to the techno-sphere of Twitter, Facebook, YouTube, and Instagram, among others. He is here including more traditional forms of entertainment journalism and infotainment which, which as in the case of Moore and Burns, spawned enough negative press and controversy ultimately increased the interest and audience size of each of their respective audiences – "no press is bad press." The other more important aspect of this, for the case of documentary theory my case, is the way these online and instant communication sites, among others, supply a constant real-time feedback loop for the cast and crew of the show – a loop that would previously have been limited to the show's producers by way of "test groups/audience feedback" or to journalistic leaks and previews (e.g. Burns' case).

This situation is part and parcel of reality TV production. The networks sponsoring such sites typically build a venue for audience feedback into its online

[252] Arienne Thompson, "16, Pregnant, and Famous," *USA Today*, November 23, 2010, 1D.

interface, clearly visible on each show's website, where registered users are invited to discuss the show in real time in blog posts or tweets as they watch free episodes streamed on their computers or networked tvs. This offers viewers a chance to establish community around the shows as they are developing, while also providing the show with user feedback 24-7. Interestingly, such feedback may comment on the action, but also pick up on other agenda, such as the blog for PDSM, which operates very much a consciousness raising venue, where users are consistently talking about birth control as well their own experiences as teenage mothers.[253]

Remember that Moore's *Fahrenheit 9/11* was quickly followed by other media responses in forms of "news" and documentary that attempted to "talk back" to Moore. Yet, by virtue of PDSM's format as a television series, such online feedback can become furtive grounds of information that could be used to rewrite or reframe the show mid-season. This phenomena is not entirely new: it is part of the advancements in technology, where social media provides marketers free consumer feedback to assist campaigns directed at increasingly more specified niche markets. The entertainment industry has also been capitalizing on social media through companies like Bluefin Labs, "a social-media analytics firm that attempts to track comments on shows and ads and discern the commenters' interests and demographics."[254] In MIT's publication, *Technology Review,* David Talbot interviewed the company's CEO, Deb Roy, who explained how the power dynamic is shifting between television producers and their audiences in ways that subvert

[253] For example on 2-7-2012, I observed a conversation about birth control, for example, username Amanda W wrote, "Condoms and BC is not always 100 percent. Do you realize that MOST -pregnanci-es are -unintende-d? Read the statistics," and on 1-18-2012 I noted a conversation about the government program WIC, one user (name not documented) wrote, "Ruth im a single mother of almost 3 year old twins. and honestly with out wic my kids wouldn't have had formula." Accessed on PDSM's website <Url>.

[254] David Talbot, "A Social Media Decoder," *Technology Review*, MIT, November-December 2011, online article, http://www.technologyreview.com/computing/38910, accessed 4-3-12.

prevailing assumptions, “that this is a one-way dialogue, audience members speaking through social media is effectively a shift in power," citing the uses of social media that allows shows to change course mid-season in response to online feedback.[255]

Yet what remains to be theorized in this situation is the production situation that I have sketched above, where traditional roles and power relations are blurred, and where individuals in the cast and crew may be making adjustments based on their personal observations as well, even if they are without the benefit of Bluefin’s instruments of large scale data collection and processing. Aside from the official network websites, cast members have Facebook and Instagram accounts, among other venues like fansites evolving to personally connect them with members of their audience. Their fans and “haters” are not shy about voicing their opinion, and the reality show subjects are chastised daily if they do something seen as “poor parenting,” or bad tactics, for example. The documentary subjects often adjust their behavior in response, as well. One mother forgot to buckle her child's car seat in an episode. After seeing the public response online, she never overlooked that again – at least not while being filmed. Additionally, shooters report that subjects can also look at how they were shot in certain scenes and make requests for those camera people who they feel present them in the most attractive way through framing, lighting, and placement, among other issues.

In addition, these online venues provide another screen, including “the third screen” (mobile devices), through which reality show subjects to project their own representations of their lives (within the limitations of confidentiality in their contracts). A subject in PDSM2 is very proud to be enrolled in college, with her credentials (scores, high school diplomas) often sneaking their way onscreen. This has also become part of

[255] Ibid.

her online presence, seen on her personal website and Facebook page, which both prominently features photos of herself at her high school graduation, baby in hand. When a show does not control or limit such appearances, they send a clear message to the public – one that can defy stereotypes evolving on the show and giving the subjects at least a partial position of advocacy (in this case, pregnancy's relation to finishing one's education).

Another important component of social media is that documentary subjects who share a show but not a venue can also communicate among themselves from the first, even if the producers try to limit it. In such cases, subjects can form alternate bonds fairly quickly, as they were able to support one another not only in the inherent stress of their reality situations, but also because they were being followed by television crew. This is how the discussion began that started the unionizing efforts of the girls discussed above.[256]

Finally, new technology has allowed the audience to participate in authoring the show, as well, through rapid feedback, as a final example will demonstrate in another way. The executive producer continued his interview with *USA Today* by complaining that that problem lies with the media's response to the show, not with the show itself: "Frankly, it's a challenge to stay focused on the real issues, to stay focused on the real challenges in all of our girls' lives with this sort of larger cloud of the tabloids, the media circus, the glamorizing and glorifying aspects of it."[257] The production team, however, will have the ultimate power: if their reality show subjects get out of hand (in situations ranging from arrests for drug use through domestic abuse, while being increasingly more

[256] Personal conversation with the shows subjects cast crew members.
[257] Arienne Thompson, "16, Pregnant, and Famous," *USA Today*, November 23, 2010, 1D.

difficult to work with on set), their contracts can be terminated or not renewed. The people indeed have the power.

In this discussion of how production situations affect the authorship of representation in reality shows, we see that the reality/documentary truth of the situation is not dictated in a top down model but produced through a series of negotiations between the cast and crew, heavily influenced by the production team (even in home office) and by audience feedback. How the new media has afforded cast and crew a rapid feedback loop, which is being used to inform the course of documentary production is revolutionary, however nascent it its development. From the larger collective agency of the cast members (culminating in situations like talent quasi-unionizing by joining under a single agent) to the more tacit individual acts of agency and resistance, reality show subject are certainly performing themselves to co-author their own representations, and advocate for themselves or chosen causes (e.g. sex education and an empowered image for young motherhood).

How reality TV can work on the ground as a production situation rather than the production of a single object. Reality TV's critics often claim that it has lost its initial documentary roots in a Grersonian instrumentality, that its subjects are exploited, and that inappropriate behaviors like teenage pregnancy or gossip are glamorized. In the case of the PDSM series, however, the show that was created in part as a kind of ongoing public service campaign to raise awareness about teenage pregnancy continues to raise consciousness around these issues in others ways – by making public spokespeople of both its producers and cast members. Importantly, the show is also used in public school systems, organizations that target at-risk youth, among others to teach against the harsh

realities of teenage motherhood.[258] As mentioned above, even in shows with lesser educational stakes, real-time dialogue on the shows' websites creates a user-generated forum for other kinds of interaction and consciousness-raising (in this case, on education on birth control and teenage pregnancy).

Yet it is not just a single show that continues to govern the discussion on the issues, because the characters that a show creates can themselves choose how to continue those initiatives or pursue individual goals by participating in speaking engagements. The show on pregnant teenagers created young spokeswomen who also continue their advocacy in different ways, such as when two of the show's subjects participated in the NOH8 campaign, designed to promote awareness around issues of gender and sexuality, where celebrity's faces were painted with NOH8 to present a collective voice of tolerance backed by celebrity power. [259]

The next section will make a case for how this rereading of the situation of reality shows highlights theoretical issues that need to be reconceptualized in documentary discourse.

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[258] A detailed account of the various educational uses of the show has been utilized can be found in Jan Hoffman, "Fighting Teenage Pregnancy," *New York Times,* April 10, 2011, 1. Importantly, this article highlights the importance of using pop cultural references to appeal to younger generations, affording a more comfortable way to address the sensitive issues addressed therein. From my own teaching experience as a graduate student at the University of Texas at Austin, pop cultural references and particularly video clips were the most effective ways of engaging my students sparking class discussion.

[259] "The NOH8 Campaign is a charitable organization whose mission is to promote marriage, gender and human equality through education, advocacy, social media, and visual protest," in part through collecting public figures and celebrity photographs with NOH8 painted on their faces. www.noh8campaign.com.

Theoretical Considerations: Reality Shows as Extended Documentary Spaces

The examples presented here point to several key issues that have yet to be theorized in the current canon of documentary theory. Foremost is how the ways reflexive modes of documentary have been understood, particularly as relating to authorship and rhetoric in subjective narratives that aim at audience identification. Most critically, the time-worn idea of objectivity in documentary will necessarily need to be reconceptualized, as it is inherently limiting in its conception, an outdated discursive coupling of an idea with the supposed veracity of the image. In the current era of new media technologies, and with the nascent rise of the "third screen," such correlations must be contextualized within the techno-sphere, which have now become intrinsic to any public voice, representation, and identity.

Remember that, in Moore's *Fahrenheit 9/11,* he maintained his reflexive approach to documentary filmmaking in order to claim a post-Griersonain instrumentality that allowed him to overtly control the truth of a documentary situation by rendering it limited -- as part of his vision. But his production situation remained very wedded to not only that of traditional documentary, but also that of narrative film. In contrast, the cases discussed above suggest that not only the filmmaker, but also the subjects of documentary can mitigate their own representation within a televised documentary series. In Stella Bruzzi's lauded text, *New Documentary: A Critical Introduction*,[260] she describes reflexive documentary filmmakers as "active participants in their films, establishing the role of director-performer, who use less formally restrictive ways of the

[260] Stella Bruzzi, New Documentary: A Critical Introduction (London: Routledge, 2009), 155. Her analysis is specific to documentary feature film formats but nonetheless can be applied to the positions of agency within all documentary productions, including reality television.

getting to what they believe is the essence of their subject."[261] Thus the kind of reflexivity seen in reality television may not allow for the kind of stylistic transparency used by Moore, but the subjects in these shows may share that active participation in their shows' construction, able to claim an authorship (at least of some kind) to their own representation. Bruzzi elaborates that there are two types of documentary films that can be categorized as performative: ones that features performative subjects – like celebrity based reality TV shows--, and films that "are inherently performative and feature the intrusive presence of the filmmaker."[262] This shows the limitations in the current understanding about the role of subject-performer-author as exemplified in the cases above, as the subjects I have been describing here do not share the same kind of celebrity Bruzzi attributes to directors, nor are they in control of the means of production to be intrusive in front of the camera. Yet her emphasis is on a active kind of voice and authorship in the form, which is an important component in understanding this new kind of agency in terms of performance. And for this reason, the reality shows' subjects must be considered in these terms, as well, because they *do* perform actively (if not dominantly) in creating meaning within the reality show *qua* variant type of documentary.

Scholarly discussions of these issues show persistent limitations on understanding that agency of the subjects in reality and documentary forms, especially in the ways scholars assume that subjects are positioned as virtually completely powerless in the "master plan" of the production team. This is evidenced in documentary theorist Brian Winston's discussion of reality television in *Claiming the Real* (1995), which among

[261] Ibid., 163.
[262] Ibid., 155.

other issues also addresses subjects are positioned in reality television. He quotes reality television producer Sebastian Doggard, who describes reality television as serving a positive social function by increasing the humanity of the subject by allowing that subject to use the event of their own documentation for self-exploration; it also purportedly grants greater humanity to the audience for whom the shows illuminate the "reality" of the human condition.[263] Doggard concludes that the subjects of his show are not "freaks," to which Winston responds: "Of course his victims are not freaks any more than the innocent dupes of any confidence trickster are. That their naivety renders them liable to exploitation does not justify that exploitation; and to point this out is not to take an elitist dismissive view of them. It is rather to castigate 'reality' television's producers."[264]

This quote perfectly summarizes the popular and scholarly view of reality TV's subjects thrown into their "15 minutes of fame," a view that highlights an-all powerful production team instead of the more inclusive or decentered power structures exemplified above. Doggard construct the subjects' agency narrowly, which, at its most conservative, at least warrants considering how, if the subjects are exploited, they do so by their own choosing. I have overheard a fellow cameraman say to a reluctant subject who was shying away from an uncomfortable scene, "you bought the ticket." And the growing number of reality show stars (and stars who repeat shows) make it unlikely that those who do "buy the ticket" are simply dupes. More liberally, the relationship between producer and subject is not a master-slave narrative, but an active performance of the televised subject who participates in their own representation in various but active and *authentic* ways.

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[263] Winston, "Claiming the Real," 266.
[264] Ibid.

The idea of authenticity in such shows' representation is consistently questioned by scholars because it involves produced scenarios and reenacted scenes that do grant the subjects neither agency nor the power of the stock subjectivity narratives within which they perform as reality show types. This is in part due to the general inflexibility in scholarly and public discourse alike to concede power to the subject of such narratives as (co)authors of their own representations -- a reluctance based in outdated expectations about documentary properly being an objective and non-biased medium.

In *Representing Reality*, however, seminal documentary film theorist Bill Nichols explains that subjective documentary narratives are only recently being accepted as related to documentary, but explains their function in a compelling way:

> these moments reclaim a dimension of the human experience that had been lost in the movement toward an observational stance and scrupulous nonintervention. They rejoin subjectivity to the objective: they add perspective that runs the risk of being dismissed as fiction but that also offers the benefit of rounding out our sense of the human within the arena of history.[265]

He acknowledges that subjectivity and identification are most often theorized in terms of narrative film, not documentary, a scholarly commonplace that thereby misses the rhetorical function of identification that is gained through the subject's voice in this particular production context.

In *The Subject of Documentary*, Michael Renov also expands on the limitations of contemporary documentary theory in regards to persistent assumptions of objectivity. He

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[265] Bill Nichols, *Representing Reality* (Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1991), 157. Certainly, Nichols was writing from a time that preceded reality TV as we know it today, but shows foresight about the necessity of theorizing the importance of subjectivity in documentary.

advocates more attention to issues of subjectivity, particularly in regards to authorship and public reception. Thus he notes that

> Given nonfictions historical linkages to the scientific project, to observational methods and the protocols of journalistic reportage, it is not at all surprising that, within the community of documentary practitioners and critics subjectivity has frequently been constructed as a kind of contamination, to be expected but minimized. Only recently has the subject/objective hierarchy begun to be displaced.[266]

His own analysis, which is only five pages long, asks that subjectivity needs to be better theorized as part of the reflexive voice in new documentary – as seen in the case of Moore. Nonetheless, Renov does not go as far as granting the kinds of agency described here in terms of the subjects of documentary and the styles of production that I am arguing here.

Importantly, when producers of a show assume the posture of objective documentary by choosing certain aesthetic considerations in establishing the show's stylistic conventions, they in practice still adhere to a vision that subjective narratives can have powerful rhetorical appeal, such as against teenage pregnancy. As they use conventional stylistic elements from narrative cinema, documentary, and news, they are trying to make the subjective experience of the show's subjects appeal to mass audiences, encouraging audience identification by any means possible. This can be seen in the casting practices of the show, as explained by a former executive producer who explained the casting agenda for PDSM, which itself was based on the influential 2007 Oscar winning narrative blockbuster *Juno* (2007), "the network cast a wide net, specifically targeted middle-class girls through church groups and parenting organizations," as

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[266] Michael Renov, *The Subject of Documentary* (Minneapolis: The University of Minnesota Press, 2004).

opposed to low income inner-city stories that they felt were less relatable to the majority of Americans.[267]

While some might say this is simply an example of strategic marketing, the enlarged situation of production still requires an understanding of what Nichols explains as identification, an oblique references to Aristotle's idea of an effective appeal to pathos: "It involves a tie between the viewer and the intersubjective domain of the character. Identification comes from being drawn into an empathetic attachment to a particular character's situation."[268] Thus the show makers consciously use both emotional appeals and demonstrative appeals as it documents (or actually creates narrative forms for) the intense emotional challenges the subjects face -- such as teenage mothers are shown in ways intending to dissuade audiences from having unprotected sex. This is an extension of the old-form TV news documentaries like *Harvest of Shame*, which aimed at persuasion, but which eschew the voice-of-god position of the newsman that accompanied them, while avoiding the personalizing/limiting of choices like Michael Moore's. Ultimately, these choices collapse the positivist binary of objective and subjective, a dismantling long overdue in documentary theory as a whole.

New York Times reporter Alessandra Stanley puts the instrumentality of the show into such a rhetorical perspective as well, arguing that they utilize another tool of rhetoric in persuasive communication – fear. In her article, "... And Baby Makes Reality TV," she states: "No pamphlet or public service ad is more likely to encourage birth control more than these tableaus of maternal boredom, fatigue and loneliness,"[269] citing the facial expression of Shannon - one of the mothers featured prominently in the show - when her

[267] Sun Feifei, "Teen Moms," 59.
[268] Nichols, "Representing Reality," 156.
[269] Alessandra Stanley, "…And Baby," Television 1.

boyfriend evicts her from his mothers house where they are both residing. (This eviction was effectively leaving her homeless, as she has no relationship with her father, and her own mother is an alcoholic who moves from hotel room to hotel room with a rotating cast of boyfriends.) In an *USA Today* interview, Shannon explained this idea another way: "I always say if you think teen pregnancy is glamorous, you haven't seen the show," she continued. "(It) shows all the struggles. I've had a lot of girls tell me the show is their birth control."[270]

It is precisely through deploying such subjective narratives that are both documentary and heavily stylized, highlighting various ideologies and power relations in the production, that such a show remains genuine claims at being authentic, which allows for the audience to buy into the program's message. Despite the widely publicized claims that the show glamorizes teenage pregnancy, Shannon's point stands true: if you actually watch the show, you cannot claim the stories glorify the experiences of pregnant teenagers as the show tackles the intense obstacles they face on a daily basis. If any particular reaction or scenario has been enacted or reenacted, it has been done on the basis of the truth of the performers' lives and experience. Another cast members highlights the "story beats" the show actually focuses on, the plot elements that emerge as the "ready-mades," the stock narrative elements, that form an episode's story arcs in editing: "In every episode, someone is trying to figure out if they can pay their rent or go to school or find a job or when they're going to be able to take their next nap, because they haven't slept in 24 hours. In every episode, someone has their heart broken."[271]

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[270] Donna Freydkin, "Oh Baby!," 2D. "Fewer Kids are Raising Kids *Newsday*, New York: April 16, 2012
[271] Feifei Sun, "Teen Moms," 60.

This show's executive producer was quoted in the section above describing the power of the techno-sphere that propelled the show into its high ratings, but scholarly work on documentary still lacks its ability to account for the way production and talent alike utilize the internet and rising third screen, as well as their on-screen personae. The online spaces around the show, as we have seen, are not only bringing together new publics around issues like sex education or surviving the vicissitudes of working minimum wage jobs, but they are also informing the decisions of the television writers and subjects, changing course of the projected reality of the shows, in a sense thus allowing the public also to take part authorship in the representations, as well. Part of the deficit in such theorizations stems from the nascent state and rapid evolutions of that technology, but also in a more general reluctance of scholars to apply documentary film theory to reality television, while systematically accounting for format differences in an ongoing series for television, as compared to older, better theorized documentary situations.

Thus what is lacking in the current generation of discourse on documentary is a reconceptualization of the relation of narrative authority and authorship to authenticity, a reconceptualization that would more comprehensively evaluate the importance of subjective narratives and demystify the idea the genre was ever truly "objective." It also needs to account for the various, if limited, forms of agency of the show's subjects, and their own roles in authoring their representation through various forms of negotiation. Finally, documentary texts can no longer be theorized outside the context of technology that has only just begun to redefine the way we understand the instrumentality of

documentary in the public sphere today -- as well we in the context of the aesthetics that developed in older forms of media use of documentary.

We have seen how various conventions of reality TV defies a simple equation of what documentaries following a post-Griersonian instrumentality, despite the claims of its critics, just as Moore's situation, with its heavier reliance on aesthetics from narrative cinema, errs on the side of limiting truth value of representations. Such expectations about "objective" documentary are outdated, but critics and scholars alike have yet to explore in more comprehensive terms the positions of authorship and subjectivity that have evolved over the last two decades, especially in terms of referring to documentary space or documentary production as an event, rather than as a product of an aesthetic or hard-news authority vision.

In opposition to traditional documentaries, much reality TV utilizes the subjective voices of its subjects, -- in one case, to create a valuable pedagogical tool as a means to prevent teenage pregnancy, and in others, to establish public personae with other kinds of personal agency. Such constructions do not necessarily reflect a predominantly a top-down model of story producing, but one where the subjects share authorship over their own representations through the various ways explicated above. Additionally, new media technology has helped fostering new forms of agency and spaces of advocacy for these subjects of reality TV and their audiences, in historically unprecedented ways that differ from the media circuits available in earlier areas -- but which are perhaps not completely different from them. In addition, new communities and new (often virtual) public spaces are being defined and recognized through audience identification with the subjective narratives of the show, which opens what has been dismissed as infotainment

at best to a role as a possible locus for civic instrumentality, even if limited to very small and diverse groups. A high-paced feedback loop for the shows producers and cast members alike means that the production side and the consumption side of these reality shows has moved even closer together than they did in the production worlds of Burns or Moore.

In the following chapter we will conclude this project to make a coherent case for the areas of documentary theory that need to be expanded.

CONCLUSION:

From Reflexivity to Interactivity: Retheorizing Documentary Instrumentality in the Nascent Age of the Third Screen

This dissertation has looked at three documentaries, *The War*, *Fahrenheit 9/11*, and the *PDSM* series, in each case taking into consideration the history of the genre, the choices in production and post-production, as well as the media events around each film's development and release. I have been particularly attentive to the changing technologies that have allowed documentary audiences to interact with the films and filmmakers in various ways that write and rewrite public memory, change how the production works and what kinds of "truth" it can produce, and position documentary not as a historical text but an active and interactive historical event of dialogue public discourse. In previous chapters I highlighted the problems in the ways documentary films have been theorized, and in this chapter I will conclude by reiterating those issues to suggest how documentary needs to be theorized today – where instrumentality may not only to be reconceived in

terms of its truth claims in content and aesthetics, but as seen in the cases of Moore and PDSM, reconceptualized in terms of narrative authority, authorship, authenticity, and subjectivity.

The introduction of this dissertation began with the case of Ken Burns' *The War*, which showed a documentary that was essentially edited by a public intervention to include a history of Latino veterans into the cannon of American memory on WWII – an unprecedented move in changing the content of film after it was "locked." I believe the success of Defend the Honor's public intervention was a harbinger of evolution in the documentary genre, the dawning of a post-reflexive era where new technologies enable communities to emerge around issues of identity and representation in documentaries and rewrite American pubic memory through dialogue dependant upon newer filmmaking and online technologies. The new era, however nascent, might be best termed the era of interactive documentary.

The case of Michael Moore's *Fahrenheit 9/11* also exemplified this interactive quality in new documentary films and the areas that need to be reconceptualized by scholars in terms of documentary discourse and its rhetorical stagings. Moore's film *Roger & Me* (1989) is often recognized by scholars as typifying the reflexive documentary genre, due to his role in the film and decisions to make the tools of filmmaking apparent in the film itself. *Fahrenheit 9/11* utilizes a similar approach, yet in the context of the technological changes since *Roger & Me*, it became not a single artifact but rather an event when a cluster of documentary films emerged quickly after its release date – all which spoke to each other and the audience. Moore was criticized for his subjective voice in the documentary's narrative, but that voice is critical to appealing

to audiences and needs to be re-theorized within the genre. Moore's performative role as the brazen opinionated subject-director did not invalidate the arguments in his film due to a lack of "objectivity" in the narrative, but rather adhered to the larger conventions of reflexive filmmaking and the current cultural voice that uses humor and irony for education, here as a post-Griersonian didactic tool.

The case of the PDSM series also highlighted the problems with traditional modes of documentary analysis that privilege objectivity in the point of view of documentary, and also assumes narratives are created through a top-down model, whereas interactive documentary shows that the subjects themselves are also participating in their own representation. Similarly to *The War,* the PDSM series showed that public now also expects to participate in documentary's narrative construction, here by providing feedback for producers and subjects alike. The case of PDSM highlighted the way new technology is inherently changing the way documentaries for television are made, allowing for a participatory creation of the documentary narrative by the production team as well as the subjects themselves, and for rapid accommodation of the feedback and interaction of viewers online. Like Moore's film, the PDSM series showed how subjectivity narratives are powerful forms of advocacy and raising awareness in the genre, they are what connect the documentary subject to the audience – a critical characteristic of interactive documentary.

As suggested by the case studies presented here, it seems overdue to reconceive the models scholars and critics have used to understand the documentary and to set it apart from other, fictionalized forms of narrative cinema. Documentary forms have proliferated, but they also have changed status to become interactive public events, not

statements framed and made by filmmakers. In consequence, documentary theorists must add to their models for understanding documentaries in the current generation as public speech acts of various sorts, each embedded in extended contexts that can best be modeled as rhetorical spaces for exchange. While filmmakers in narrative cinema pay attention to genre conventions, available technical resources, and audience issues, analyses of their works all too often focus on the product of their assumptions. In contrast, the new generation of documentary filmmakers, like their fellow directors in reality TV, often pay less attention to a pre-scripted narrative and research than they do to what happens in the filmmaking process, including production and post production as well as the public events around the film that stage its impact in the public sphere and construct the publics with which it is supposed to interact. At the same time, the range of genres or forms that are documentary-like if not classical documentary has grown, to include not just reality TV, but mockumentaries, recreations (many exist on the History Channel), and various technically enhanced or simulated documentary elements to supplement missing video footage (from the Burns effect for photos, through the rotoscoping used in *The Chicago 11* that allowed stagings of scenes that were acted to existing radio recordings without needing actors *as* actors).

The introduction to this project suggested several key elements in understanding this more dynamic and performance-centered concept of documentary. By extension, these elements must be present in analyses of new documentary by scholars and in approaches to teaching them. At the very least, a more comprehensive theory of the documentary mode, and any presentation of its meaning in teaching, must account for:

- The influence of the political and historical contexts of documentary production as determining of the *site* in which various forms of documentary-as-performance are staged (the rhetorical space the documentary project occupied or was designed to manage).
- The rhetorical function of the aesthetic and technical choices made by documentary filmmakers to frame and present the story within the political and social views of the filmmaker (the appropriate conventions for representing an act of meaning as part of the documentary mode).
- The way in which the point of view of the filmmaker becomes inscribed in public memory as text, becoming an instrument of or a transgression against hegemonic ideology (the position of the *rhetor*, used to stage the documentary utterance).
- Considerations for the notion that documentary texts are thought of by the public as being "neutral" or "objective," which can account for how this truth-framing buttresses the filmmakers claims to historical, social, and political truths (historical conventions of use as represented in its speech acts).
- How the newest technological advancements of our era facilitate communication between newer audiences or documentary public(s), documentary texts, documentary discourses and public memory (the media allowing various synchronous, asynchronous, progressive, resistant, etc. interactions between the point of the documentary's origin and its uses).
- More specifically, in this new era marked by a video-centric culture, how has the internet has become the new town hall for documentary text(s) to be codified as public speech (in online venues for viewing documentary films as well as the film

websites and related boards/listservs). That is, what is the role of media in creating "public speech" in the rhetorical mode, and how "the documentary's impact" is from the first a mixed corpus of media and genres, including not just conventional publicity, but also blogs, comment threads, talkbacks, and the like?

- Finally, in what ways do these new digital venues facilitate public(s) contest issues of memory in documentary films? That is, what *subpublics* participate in the documentary events, what roles do they have, and what kinds of agency do they have in constituting, completing, resisting, etc. the transmission of meaning into memory contexts.?

This is an incomplete list, but it does suggest that the "message model" (sender to receiver) often used to describe the narrative film and its impact on its audiences needs to be replaced by a more plural model that points to the different publics, different modes of utterance, different media, and different cultural-temporal frames that emerge across the spectrum of documentary events or performances that I have been discussing here. And I have suggested a few ways that rhetorical studies in public communication scholarship can help clarify what kinds of meanings are being transferred in documentary events, how, and with what at stake.

This shift of theoretical focus for teachers and scholars will not be easy. Where film studies is often reticent about characterizing documentary as persuasive texts (in favor of discussing technique as “storytelling” and message as "propaganda"), rhetoricians are often relatively uneducated about the techniques of filmmaking and media interaction as seen in the critics of Moore – where the combination of both fields of study will support the best foundation for documentary theory.

Rhetorician Kevin Deluca illuminates another important problem with rhetorical analysis of visual texts, claiming they are much more focused on the written text without the context of the image. He explains how that transfer in the reverse direction has been impeded:

> Though scholars often study it as such, television is not radio with pictures, and the meaning of images is not captured by its captions. To think such is to miss every thing important about imagistic discourse. To understand the rhetorical force of the televisual/imagistic public sphere requires a "reading" of images that resists using our ready-to-hand theoretical tools.[272]

Again, we see the necessity of such awareness being extended to documentary, so that the theorist can be called to understand at least basic principles in filmmaking techniques as each having particular weight in the act of communication, just as classical rhetoricians spoke of gesture, posture, and voice as supporting the act of communication. It is particularly important, to look at the *rhetoric* of documentary film to understand the persuasive argument is crafted through its textual, visual, and aural components, and how that argument needs to be seen as a potentially more expansive exchange, comprising subpublics and turn-taking, rather than a single message.

Deluca's theories on images buttress the fundamental necessity in looking at documentary: that documentary can not be understand as analogous to written text, or to a simple transfer of message from author to reader/speaker to hearer. It is instead best seen as an interactive document, created through the choices of the filmmakers and often the subjects themselves as seen in the case of the PDSM series; at the same time, it must also be framed as a diachronic event situated in its historical context and with a certain life span. For example, where Giles and Giles criticized Moore for his use of irony and partisan politics, they did not see his choice as relating to the standard practices of

[272] Deluca, *Image Politics,* 19.

reflexive filmmaking, which allow or even encourage a filmmaker to utilize overt tactics like irony to achieve his political and artistic vision. Thus they were also lacking in historicizing the moment the film was released in the context of documentary evolution. These scholars' lack of familiarity with those conventions at least blunted, if not completely subverted their critique by over-simplifying the range of choices and expressive tools that Moore was working with, as a filmmaker well versed in conventional rhetorical arguments (polemics, verbally and visually), in documentary film history as a specific tradition of expression and in filmmaking practices that gave him various syntaxes to work with (from the aesthetic ones of narrative cinema, through the conventions of early documentarians, to news and reality shows). Scholars today must take into consideration the standard conventions of filmmaking and filming in *all* these framings to understand what norms are being adhered to and what are being broken.

I am not alone in suggesting the necessity of such a theoretical reframing of an academic discipline. Deluca maintains that the instrumentality of visual rhetoric is critical to shifting hegemonic practices and discourses:

> In today's televisual public sphere corporations and states stage spectacles certifying their status before the people/public and subaltern counterpublic participate through the performance of image events, employing the consequent publicity as a social medium through which to hold corporations and states accountable, help form public opinion and constitute their own identities as subaltern counterpublics.[273]

It is precisely at this locus that this latest generation of documentary production has come to work as in an interactive force of production contestation in public discourse, as documentaries and their publics interact to create new counter-hegemonic narratives and memories.

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[273] Ibid., 20-21.

It is important to highlight that in 2012 we are faced with an entirely different documentary interface than *any* of the prior theorists were able to pursue, due to the interesting historical time we are in regards to technology. As I exemplified in chapter 1 the phases of documentaries' evolution have always been marked by its changing technologies for production and distribution. With the addition of interactive media, that evolution has the potential to become in some of its incarnations one that is more fundamentally democratic than ever before. Filmmaking itself has changed its face: it has never been so available to the public, not only through accessibility to cheaper production gear, but also in the education/tutorials available online about filmmaking practices. In addition the internet has provided another screen to showcase documentary television and film. The space of documentary has thus acquired a dimension of access and agency that it has not had, as well as a feasible time-line to consider that one documentary can be a direct, almost immediate response to another one.

The audience function has also become more democratic, outside the almost exclusive control of traditional distribution channels. The rise of the so-called "third screen" has begun to catch the media's attention, as more of the public is watching videos on their mobile devices – phones and tablets. There are now online venues for user-generated commentary and documentary subjects to have direct interaction with the public. In addition, community funding for documentary projects is at all time-high, particularly with the introduction of sites like Kickstarter, one of the most popular "crowd funding" platforms - which is now providing more financial backing for films that the National Endowment of the Arts.[274] It is propelling projects forward that would have

[274] Jessica Jackley, "The Power and the Peril of Our Crowdfunded Future," *The Atlantic* (July 2, 2012), http://www.theatlantic.com/technology/archive/2012/07/the-power-and-the-peril-of-our-crowdfunded-

never seen the light of day if funding were to have been left to a studio or network. Here, the public is deciding what is important – again shifting away from the top down model of grants to a more democratic process. The nascent stage of these technologies make it difficult to accurately project where documentary is headed, but certainly indicate a new era of documentary, one that is post-reflexive and pro-democratic, and certainly interactive.

Understanding documentary as not a single text, but as an archive of interactive and interacting texts is critical for rhetoricians and documentary scholars alike. While technology is changing too rapidly to understand exactly how these new interfaces for public communication are changing documentary, any analysis of documentary film cannot ignore the role of technology in constructing documentary discourse. It is critical to understand that documentary films are functioning in a more democratic space for communicating understanding than ever before. What had been the product of a director or research, a the top down model of the narrative construction, is now being subverted; the public now has access to production tools and finding the process of filmmaking more transparent than ever before. The more the public knows about the construction of documentary films (in form, content, and media production), the more they are able to participate in the dialogue around films, seen in the response to *Fahrenheit 9/11*, which generated a rapid succession of films talking back to it. The subjects of documentary and the public can no longer be considered as passive: in 2012 they have already gained a kind of agency in documentary discourse, both as content providers and as evaluators.

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future/259304/, accessed online July 10, 2012. The article states that the JOBS act, signed into law by Obama this year allows "small businesses to raise funding from non-traditional sources." The article also notes more than 400 crowd-funding platforms were operating at the beginning of 2012 raised 1.5 billion last year alone, with that effort expecting to accelerate post JOBS.

This shift in the public's use of documentary also speaks to the importance of subjective narratives within spheres of instrumentality proper to the documentary, since subjective narratives are known to foster audience identification. This demystification of documentary's "objective" point of view by admission of the clearly acknowledged limits associated with subjectivity is long overdue in documentary discourse. Remember that privileging "objective" narratives is an assumption rooted in the idea that the camera is scientific tool rather than an artistic instrument. Yet documentaries are crafted by storytellers, behind the camera and in the edit. In *Cinematography Theory and Practice* (2012), Blain Brown provides a representative statement in explaining camera position (point of view) in terms of its function as a subjective/objective voice. He likens the camera to the three grammatical voices that play in literature: first person, second person, and third person, with the first person being subjective and the third person being "objective":

> Imagine we are watching some people argue from over twenty feet away. There is not much motivation for us to get deeply involved physically or emotionally. The complete opposite is when we are one of the people involved in the argument" we are completely engaged in everyway.[275]

His analysis of camera position in regards to point of view reiterates the importance to documentary analysis of understanding production technique, yet it also shows the importance of acknowledging subjectivity in a film's point of view, as a bridge between audience and subject. All films express a point of view; some are just more transparent about the process than others – as seen in the production differences between the case of Moore and the PDSM series.

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[275] Blain Brown, *Cinematography Theory and Practice* (Massachusetts: Elsevier Inc, 2012), 33.

In addition, the past decade has seen the collapse of distinctions between non-fiction and fiction film production techniques, proving the fallaciousness of the dichotomy between entertainment driven narratives and educational narratives ala Grierson. While there has always been some element of this collapse in the history of film, it has never been as acute or consistent both in style and content, as seen in these case studies. The case of PDSM showed how the producers used story beats to construct the narrative, which was assembled more like a narrative script rather than an observational documentary in which the camera is purportedly simply recording action as it plays out. Instead, documentary crews are directing action, which is clearly not objective such as in the case of Moore who was staging that action often by creating absurd scenarios and performances. In both PDSM and Moore, the subjects were left to interact with the story beats -- to "interpret the script," if this were narrative cinema, or by means of Moore's hallmark tactics such as asking congressmen to sign up for military service. Fiction films are also adopting these strategies, as well. It is increasingly more common that narrative films are written not as full scripts but guided by scenarios for improvisation or framed as story boards, which resemble the story beats which the actors will riff off of. Larry David used this technique in his show *Curb Your Enthusiasm,* for instance. We are also seeing that collapse together in post-production techniques, where archival material is not just being preserved in a purist documentary practice, rather effects are utilized during post production that change the color, texture, and feel of what was shot in the field – all which work towards the argument of the film.

The expressive results are important. Blain Brown explains that narrative films are often shot in "documentary style," to present a point of view that is more subjective

and authentic, marked by a handheld camera that is "loose," where "the actors movements don't seem preplanned." Providing recent examples like, *The Hurt Locker* and *Cloverfield,* he continues:

> It seems like documentary style but it is not really. When shooting a real documentary, we can almost never do second takes, or have them repeat an action. Our aim in shooting fiction scenes like this is make it seem like a documentary. In most cases, scenes like this are shot several times with the actors repeating the scene for several takes.[276]

Although this book was published in 2012, it is designed to speak to narrative films, and the author is clearly holding onto the idea of documentary as objective with rules of practice that are outdated as seen in the case studies herein. Brown's description of narrative practices of filmmaking do in fact reflect in the interactive documentaries of today. Art has always been imbued in the science of documentary filmmaking, but the idea that the two are mutually exclusive can no longer be upheld in documentary discourse. The era of interactive documentary may be marked by this total collapse of method, which is both aesthetic and instrumental.

In sum, then, I have argued that documentary theory today must be understood not only the context of its rich history but also in its movement towards interactivity, as public space communication, where truth lies in the productive contestation of ideas generated around the documentary text. The authorship of documentary must be understood not as a filmmaker choosing to create a work that is an "objective" science, but rather one modeling an interaction, as compromises are crafted between documentary filmmakers, their subjects, and the public. Acknowledging this model also accepts that subjective narratives can no longer be marginalized in documentary film studies and critiques. Film is guided by a subjective voice, no matter how much that voice attempts to

[276] Ibid., 30.

guise itself under the stylistics of direct cinema and observational camera work. The subjective voice has always been the voice of documentary, and now it must be reclaimed: the subjective voice acts as another tool for audience identification, not as somehow "less truthful" in its media forms.

Michael Chanan makes this point in another way as he defines documentary as a connection between the individual viewer and history, "Documentary is the form where the public construction of history takes over from living memory even as it incorporates it, but which, as it does so, enlarges the space of public memory both in the present and the archive of the future."[277] It is unclear what the trajectory of documentary instrumentality will be in the future -- what kinds of rhetorical effects it will take as its own goals--, but it is certain that instrumentality is more democratic than any other time in the genre's history. Documentaries are not historical texts, but they are historical events of public discourse, which can construct history, community and identity through the discourses implicated in that event. As such, documentary discourse is constituted by an interactive narrative construction of history, and will, I believe, become imperative to shaping the social and political landscape in the public sphere -- a new rhetoric of public memory and political instrumentality.

[277] Chanan, *The Politics*, 269.

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